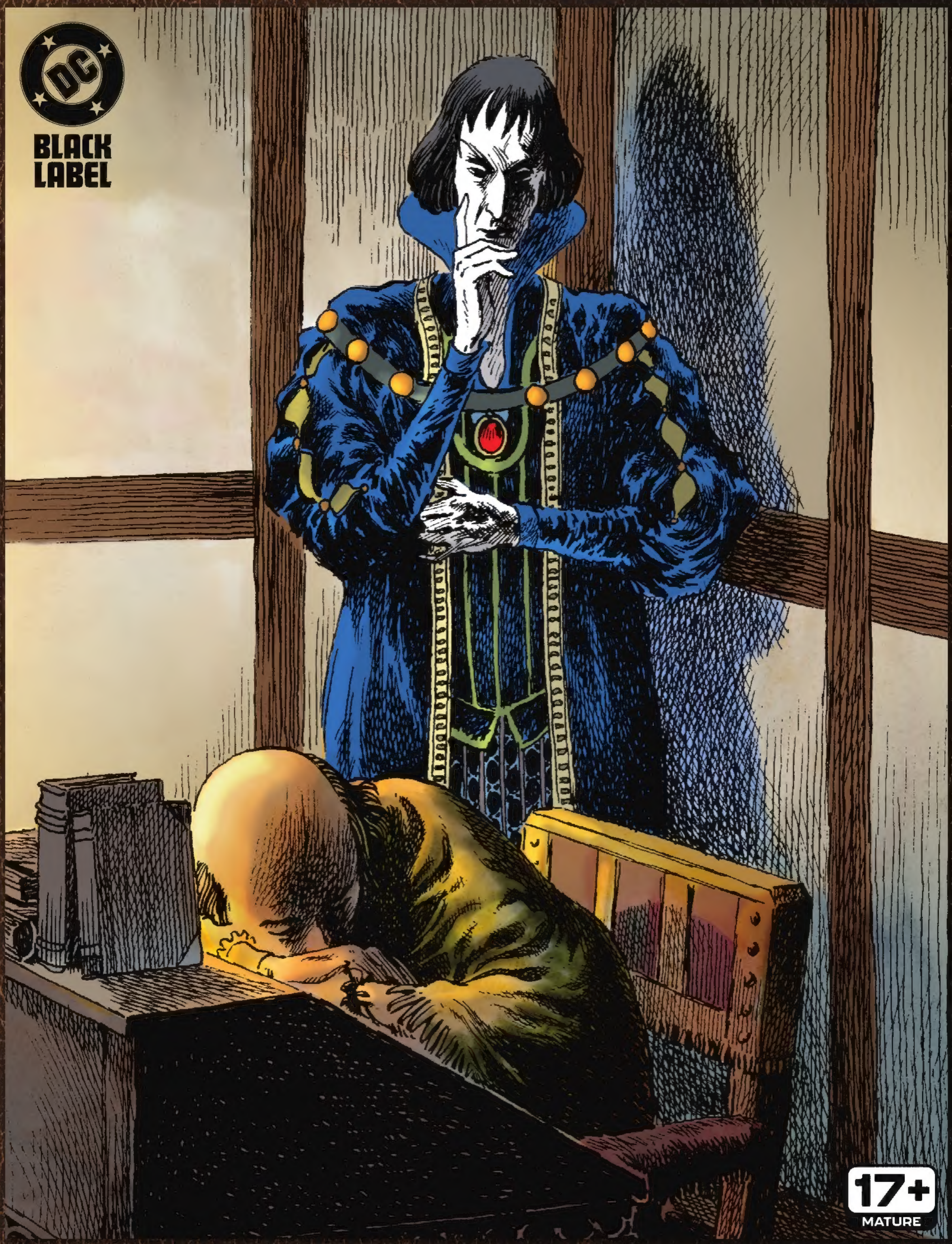
# THE SANDMAN™

## The Complete Shakespeare Collection

BLACK LABEL



17+ MATURE

GAIMAN • VESS • OLIFF

BLACK LABEL

# THE SANDMAN

## THE COMPLETE SHAKESPEARE COLLECTION


**NEIL GAIMAN**
WRITER
With additional material taken from the works of William Shakespeare

**CHARLES VESS**
**BRYAN TALBOT**
**JOHN RIDGWAY**
**MICHAEL ZULLI**
**STEVE PARKHOUSE**
ARTISTS

**STEVE OLIFF**
COLORIST

**TODD KLEIN**
LETTERER

**JOHN RIDGWAY, CHARLES VESS,** and **STEVE OLIFF**
COLLECTION COVER ARTISTS


---


**SANDMAN** based on the characters created by **NEIL GAIMAN, SAM KIETH,** and **MIKE DRINGENBERG**

**KAREN BERGER** Editor – Original Series
**SHELLY BOND & TOM PEYER** Associate Editors – Original Series
**TOM PEYER** Assistant Editor – Original Series
**REZA LOKMAN** Editor – Collected Edition
**KENNY LOPEZ** Design Director – Periodicals
**TIFFANY PONSIANO** Publication Production

**MARIE JAVINS** VP – Editor-in-Chief

**JIM LEE** President, Publisher & Chief Creative Officer
**ANNE DePIES** Senior VP & General Manager
**LARRY BERRY** VP – Brand Design & Creative Services
**DON FALLETTI** VP – Manufacturing & Production
**LAWRENCE GANEM** VP – Editorial Programming & Talent Strategy
**NICK J. NAPOLITANO** VP – Publishing & Business Operations
**NANCY SPEARS** VP – Sales & Marketing


---


THE SANDMAN: THE COMPLETE SHAKESPEARE COLLECTION I. December, 2024. Published by DC Comics, 4000 Warner Blvd., Bldg. 700, 2nd Floor, Burbank, CA 91522. GST # is R125921072. Originally published as THE SANDMAN 13, 19, and 75


Copyright © 1990, 1996 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved. All characters featured in this issue, the distinctive likenesses thereof, and related elements are trademarks of DC Comics. The stories, characters, and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. DC Comics does not read or accept unsolicited submissions of ideas, stories, or artwork. For Advertising and Custom Publishing contact dccomicsadvertising@dc.com. For details on DC Comics Ratings, visit dc.com/ratings.

ALL IN

# ABSOLUTE WONDER WOMAN

NO ISLAND.
NO AMAZONS.
ABSOLUTE FURY.

Written by **KELLY THOMPSON** • Art and cover by **HAYDEN SHERMAN**

Meet Diana, **Princess of Hell**, beginning in **OCTOBER**

© & ™ DC.

# A NEW VISION OF AN OLD DREAM

Sometimes you have ideas that are:
Shall we say: Difficult.
Or perhaps: Star-crossed.
Or, how about: A challenge to complete.

The only reason this collection exists is because while I was trying to restore Charles Vess's art on the color guide edition of *Sandman* #19, I went online and found out that Sandman and Shakespeare had three encounters, and all I knew about was the middle one.

Once I figured that out, it seemed obvious to remaster the other two (*Sandman* #13 and #75), and put them together with #19 to make a collected trilogy. To tell the truth, the *Sandman* #19 color guide edition, as beautiful as it ended up, was really tough to pull off, so I figured it couldn't get any worse...

Oops. Silly man.

I will tell you, without elaborating, that these three issues were some of the hardest comics I've ever colored in my 45-year career. They challenged me on levels that were devious in their weirdness. There was a twist at every turn. Gremlins in the shadows. Techniques that worked for one issue, wouldn't work for the next. When a problem would kick my butt, *(And they did all the time)*, I got up, dusted my ego off, and just figured out how to solve whatever was in front of me. It was tricky and time-consuming, and I thank my editors for their patience.

But now that I'm done, I look at these three issues, and I know I gave each and every page respect. It was worth all the work.

Because I knew I was giving Sandman, and all his fans, a new take on his dreams. A long-deserved reimagining, and a chance to take a classic tale, and hopefully give it new life.

I also knew, in his way, Sandman will reciprocate. And in yet another twist of Fate, the third chapter, "The Tempest," was the last Sandman issue. As it turns out, this will be the last coloring job for me. I'm not retiring, but like Neil, after Sandman, I'm moving on to other things.

Here's hoping we both gave you, our readers, a new vision of an old dream.

Steve Oliff
Point Arena, CA
2024

NO. 13
FEB 1990

# THE SANDMAN™

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

## the DOLL'S HOUSE part 4

GAIMAN • ZULLI • PARKHOUSE

# "MEN OF GOOD FORTUNE"

GAIMAN WRITER | ZULLI PENCILS | PARKHOUSE INKS | KLEIN LETTERS | OLIFF COLORS | YOUNG ASSOC.EDITOR | BERGER EDITOR

--THIRD POLL TAX IN THREE YEARS. WHAT ELSE COULD WE HAVE DONE?

ALL I'M SAYING IS WHEN BALL AND TYLER WERE KILLED, THE SPIRIT OF THE WORKING MAN DIED WITH THEM.

PENNY ALE AND COLD BACON. PENNY ALE AND COLD BACON. I WOULD HAVE GOOD HOT MEAT AND FRENCH WINE.

--WAR, PLAGUE, AND TWO BLOODY POPES, FIGHTING LIKE WEASELS IN HEAT. THE END OF THE WORLD IS SOON, YOU MARK ME.

...MURDER, NOR RAPE. WE NEED A RETURN TO LAW, AND TO ORDER. THE KING SHOULD ACT AGAINST THESE BANDITS.

...very well. But I still do not see what purpose this will serve.

--LOOK, I'VE SEEN DEATH. I LOST HALF MY VILLAGE TO THE BLACK DEATH. I FOUGHT UNDER BUCKINGHAM IN BURGUNDY, AND YOU KNOW WHAT A PIG'S EAR THAT WAS.

WELL, AT LEAST I GET OUT AND MEET THEM.

I JUST THINK MAYBE IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR YOU TO SEE THEM ON THEIR TERMS, INSTEAD OF YOURS.

IT'S NOT LIKE I DON'T KNOW WHAT DEATH IS.

A PENNY ALE FOR ME, AND ANOTHER FOR MY BROTHER, AN' IT PLEASE YOU.

CERTAINLY, LADY.

GEOFFREY, I SEE NO GREAT WRONG IN WRITING IN THE *LANGUE DES TRAVAILLISTES* RATHER THAN *LA BELLE FRANÇAIS*; BUT ENGLISH HAS ITS OWN FORMS OF VERSE.

*PIERS PLOWMAN.* THAT'S WHAT PEOPLE WANT. NOT FILTHY TALES IN RHYME ABOUT PILGRIMS.

BUT I *ENJOY* RHYMING, EDMUND. AND I ENJOY TAVERN TALES TOLD OF AN EVENING.

...UP HER DRESS, AND SHE SAYS, "ARE YOU HUNTING FOR RABBITS AGAIN, FRIAR?"

Y'ARE A FOOL, HOB. DEATH COMES TO EVERY MAN. THIRTY YEARS, IF HE ESCAPE THE PLAGUE, OR THE FLUX, OR THE FRENCH. SIXTY YEARS, WITH FORTUNE, AND IF GOD IS WILLING.

THEN THEY PUT YOU IN THE GROUND, TO AWAIT THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT.

THERE YOU GO-- PROVES MY POINT. ALL I'M SAYING IS THIS.

NOBODY *HAS* TO DIE.

THE ONLY REASON PEOPLE DIE, IS BECAUSE *EVERYONE* DOES IT. YOU ALL JUST GO ALONG WITH IT.

IT'S *RUBBISH*, DEATH. IT'S *STUPID*. I DON'T WANT NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.

A delegation of faerie came to me, last night. They are talking about abandoning this plane for ever.

SHUSH. LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE.

I MEAN, WHAT'S IT *GOOD* FOR, EH?

THINK ABOUT IT.

I MADE MY MIND UP ARSE DEEP IN BURGUNDY MUD. "HOB GADLING," I TOLD MYSELF, EVERY MAN AND WOMAN DIES, THEY SAY--"

--EXCEPT THE WANDERING JEW, AHASUERUS, WHO DENIED OUR LORD.

YEAH. FAIR ENOUGH. EVERYONE DIES, I THOUGHT (EXCEPT FOR MAYBE THE WANDERING JEW), BUT WHY THE HELL SHOULD *I*? I MIGHT GET LUCKY.

THERE'S ALWAYS A FIRST TIME.

NO, IT'S RUBBISH, DEATH IS. I MEAN, THERE'S SO MUCH TO DO. SO MANY THINGS TO SEE. PEOPLE TO DRINK WITH. WOMEN TO SWIVE.

*YOU* LOT MAY DIE. I EXPECT YOU *WILL*, 'COS YOU'RE STUPID. NOT ME, THOUGH.

It might be interesting...?

VERY WELL.

ARE YOU GOING TO TELL HIM, OR AM I?

VERY WELL, LITTLE BROTHER.

I shall.

VERY WELL.

GEOFFREY, FOR A DIPLOMAT, *TU JUGES MAL LA NATURE HUMAINE.*

THE ENGLISH WERE BORN TO HUNT SPITTARD AND STAG. IF THEY TAKE THAT AWAY FROM US, 'TWILL BE "JOHN BALL HAS RUNGEN YOUR BELL" ONCE MORE.

Did I hear you say that you had no intention of ever dying?

UM. YEAH. *YEAH.* THAT'S RIGHT. IT'S A *MUG'S* GAME. I WON'T HAVE ANY PART OF IT.

Then you must tell me what it's like.

Let us meet here again, Robert Gadling. In this tavern of the White Horse.

In a hundred years.

*OH,* HE'S GOT YOU THERE, HOB GADLING!

A *STING!* A *TOUCH!* YOUR GAME IS CALLED, HOB!

*A-HA-HA-HA!* A 'NUNDRED YEARS! YES, AND *I'M* POPE URBAN!

AND *I'M* POPE CLEMENT! OH, *HOO-HOO,* I SHALL SPLIT MY SIDES OF LAUGHTER...

DON'T MIND THEM. THEY'RE THICK AS KING DICK, THE LOT OF THEM. A HUNDRED YEARS' TIME. ON THIS DAY.

I WILL SEE YOU IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD FOURTEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY NINE, THEN.

"WHO WAS THAT, THEN, HOBBSIE?"

"HAVEN'T A CLUE. BUT I'LL TELL YOU WHAT, CRISPIN: I'LL ASK HIM THE NEXT TIME I SEE HIM. IN A HUNDRED YEARS' TIME."

"OOH-HA-HA, *DON'T.* I CAN LAUGH NO MORE. YOU'LL *KILL* ME!"

HOW DID YOU KNOW?
WHO ARE YOU?
A WIZARD? A SAINT?
A DEMON? HAVE I UNWITTING MADE A BARGAIN WITH THE DEVIL?
No. I am merely... interested.
THEN WHY AREN'T I DEAD, LONG SINCE? IS THIS SOME KIND OF GAME?
You have not died, I see.
HAHH. NO. I'D SAY THE SAME ABOUT YOU, ONLY YOU'RE SO PALE THAT I COULD BE WRONG.
Yes. You could. I came because I am... interested. Death will not touch you, Hob Gadling, unless you truly desire it.

YEAH. LIKE I SAID. IT'S JUST PEOPLE GOING ALONG WITH IT.

I'LL TELL YOU, THOUGH. IT'S ALL CHANGING.

In what way?

FNUUURF

HEAR THAT? NOW WE HAVE CHIMBLIES THEY COMPLAIN OF RHEUMES, CATARRHS, THEY SNEEZE AND GROAN.

WHEN WE HAD HONEST BRAZIERS OUR HEADS DID NEVER ACHE. THE SMOKE WAS GOOD HARDENING FOR THE TIMBERS OF THE HOUSES AND GOOD MEDICINE FOR THE MAN AND HIS FAMILY.

OLD IDIOT!

I'LL TELL YOU, CHIMNEYS IS BRILLIANT. NOT HAVING YOUR EYES WATERING ALL THE TIME. NOT FREEZING FROM THE HOLES IN THE WALL.

AND LITTLE CLOTH PIECES FOR YOUR NOSE. IN THE OLD DAYS WE USED OUR SLEEVES.

SEE THE BUNCH IN THE CORNER, PLAYING AT TRUMP, AND RUFF? WE NEVER HAD *THEM* IN THE OLD DAYS. PLAYING-CARDS...

Most impressive. What WILL you people think of next?

SOMETHING TO GET RID OF FLEAS, WITH ANY LUCK.

So what have you been doing for the last hundred years?

SAME TRADE AS BEFORE. SOLDIERING, MAINLY. A LITTLE BANDITRY HERE AND THERE, IF I COULDN'T FIND WHAT YOU'D EXACTLY CALL A WAR...

I WAS PLEASED WHEN THE FIGHTING CAME TO ENGLAND. SAVES GOING ALL THE WAY TO FRANCE... SOMETIMES I'VE FOUGHT FOR YORK, SOMETIMES FOR LANCASTER.

THAT'S BEEN QUIET FOR A FEW YEARS NOW, SINCE RICHMOND GOT IN. KING HENRY AS IS. BUT IT'LL START UP AGAIN SOON, YOU'LL SEE.

AND IN THE MEANTIME, I'VE STARTED IN A TRADE. WORKING WITH A FRIEND OF MINE.

IT WON'T LAST.

BUT IT'S A NEW TRADE. IT'S CALLED *PRINTING*. DON'T NEED TO BE A GUILD MEMBER-- NOT YET. NEVER BE A *REAL* DEMAND FOR IT, MIND YOU. HARD WORK.

BUT BEATS THE HELL OUT OF ROTTING TO MAGGOTS IN THE GROUND, EH?

"So you still want to live?"

"OH YES."

"A hundred years, then?"

"OH YES."

WELL, KIT, YOUR THEME AS I SAW IT IS THIS: THAT FOR ONE'S ART AND FOR ONE'S DREAMS ONE MAY CONSORT AND BARGAIN WITH THE DARKEST POW'RS.

'TIS SO.

MY FRIEND!

SIT DOWN. I'VE GOT IN A COUPLE OF BOTTLES OF WINE FOR US. ALREADY MADE A START ON THEM.

Hello, Hob.

"HOB"? FAITH, THAT TAKES ME BACK SOME FEW YEARS.

IT'S SIR ROBERT GADLEN NOW, OLD STRANGER.

You have had good fortune, I take it.

GOOD FORTUNE? THE GODS HAVE SMILED ON ME, AS THEY SMILE ON ALL ENGLAND, WHERE NO MAN IS SLAVE OR BONDSMAN.

VENISON PASTY? NO? THEY'RE GOOD.

LET'S SEE...

LAST TIME WE SPOKE I WAS WORKING WITH BILLY CAXTON. I MADE SOME GOLD FROM THAT. PUT IT TO WORK IN HENRY TUDOR'S SHIPYARDS. I MADE A SMALL PILE. I'VE STILL GOT SHIPPING INTERESTS.

WENT NORTH FOR A YEAR OR SO, CAME BACK AS MY SON. DONE THAT TWICE, NOW.

GIRL! MORE WINE!

WHEN FAT HENRY DONE FOR THE MONASTERIES I BOUGHT MY ESTATES. AND A HEALTHY GIFT OF GOLD TO THE CROWN SAW TO A KNIGHTHOOD.

IT'S SO DAMN RICH.

I see.

AND THAT'S NOT ALL. *HERE,* TAKE A LOOK AT *THIS!* MY FAIR ELEANOR. AND LITTLE ROBYN.

MY *FIRST* SON BORN IN OVER 200 YEARS ON THIS EARTH. WELL, THAT I HAVE KNOWN OF, ANYWAY.

AND THE QUEEN HERSELF SLEPT AT MY HOUSE LAST SUMMER. *THAT* WAS EXPENSIVE.

IT'S FUNNY...

*THIS* IS WHAT I ALWAYS DREAMED HEAVEN WOULD BE LIKE, WAY BACK. IT'S SAFE TO WALK THE STREETS. ENOUGH FOOD, AND GOOD WINE.

LIFE IS SO *RICH.*

MORE *WINE!* MORE *ALE!* AND BUSS ME QUICK, MY SWEET.

I'LL STICK WITH BOYS-- MY HORNED "ACTRESSES."

SWEET KIT. THE PLAY I GAVE YOU. DID YOU READ...?

I MUST CONFESS I HAVE. I...THOUGHT IT, WELL... YOU *ACT* WELL, WILL, BUT-- LISTEN, LET ME READ...

*"HUNG BE THE HEAVENS WITH BLACK, YIELD DAY TO NIGHT! COMETS IMPORTING CHANGE OF TIMES AND STATES, BRANDISH YOUR CRYSTAL TRESSES IN THE SKY, AND WITH THEM SCOURGE THE BAD, REVOLTING STARS."*

AT LEAST IT SCANS. BUT "BAD REVOLTING STARS"?

IT'S MY FIRST PLAY.

AND IT SHOULD BE YOUR LAST.

GOD'S WOUNDS! IF ONLY I COULD WRITE LIKE YOU!

IN FAUSTUS WHERE YOU WROTE-- "TO GOD! HE LOVES THEE NOT! THE GOD THOU SERVEST IS THINE OWN APPETITE, WHEREIN IS FIXED THE LOVE OF BEELZEBUB."

"TO HIM I'LL BUILD AN ALTAR AND A CHURCH, AND OFFER LUKEWARM BLOOD OF NEW-BORN BABES."

IT CHILLS MY BLOOD.

AND SO IT SHOULD, GOOD WILL.

I WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO HAVE YOUR GIFTS. OR MORE THAN ANY-THING TO GIVE MEN DREAMS, THAT WOULD LIVE ON LONG AFTER I AM DEAD.

I'D BARGAIN, LIKE YOUR FAUSTUS, FOR THAT BOON.

Who is he?

ACTS A BIT. WROTE A PLAY.

Is he good?

NO. HE'S CRAP.

NOW, THAT CHAP THERE, WITH THE BROKEN LEG, NEXT TO HIM. BENT AS A PEWTER DUCAT. HE'S A GOOD PLAYWRIGHT.

Hmmm.

Are you Will Shaxberd?

AYE, SIR. HAVE WE MET?

We have. But men forget, in waking hours.

I heard your talk, Will. Would you write great plays? Create new dreams to spur the minds of men? Is that your will?

IT IS.

Then let us talk.

WHITE BREAD.

I WOULD HAVE *KILLED* FOR WHITE BREAD, TWO HUNDRED YEARS BACK.

COME TO THINK OF IT, I *DID*, A COUPLE OF TIMES.

EVERYTHING TO LIVE FOR. AND NOWHERE TO GO BUT UP.

HMMPH. DO NOT BE SO FREE IN ASSIGNING PLAGUES, FIRES OR FLOODS TO THE JUDGEMENT OF THE LORD, FOR OUR SINS.

... MAKE MORE FROM THEIR POOR DOLE THAN THEY WOULD FOR HONEST WORK. I TELL YOU, SIR, MEN WITHOUT JOBS SELDOM DRINK OTHER THAN THE STRONGEST ALE-HOUSE BEER, OR EAT ANY BREAD SAVE THAT MADE WITH THE

CAN I HELP YOU, SIR?

No, thank you. I am waiting for someone.

YER FACKIN' DUNGWITS! GERRAHTAMEWAY!

GET AWAY, YOU FUDDLED *JUG-BITER!*

*THIS* TAVERN'S FOR *GENTRY* AND *DECENT* FOLK. YOU GET BACK TO THE *STEWS* WITH THE REST OF THE *FILTH!*

*UHN.*

Let him be.

He is my guest.

KHK. KHKAK.

I KNEW YE'D BE HERE.

DO YOU KNOW... KHAHK...

HOW *HUNGRY* A MAN CAN GET? IF HE DOESN'T *DIE*? BUT DOESN'T *EAT*?

*SHE* DIED. IN CHILDBIRTH. *ELEANOR*. I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT SHE *LOOKED* LIKE ANY MORE. I PAWNED HER PORTRAIT FIFTY YEARS SINCE...

ROBYN DIED IN A TAVERN BRAWL WHEN HE WAS TWENTY. I DIDN'T GO OUT MUCH AFTER THAT.

THEY TRIED TO DROWN ME AS A WITCH. I'D LIVED THERE FOR FORTY YEARS. OVERCONFIDENT...

I GOT OUT WITH MY SKIN. LITTLE MORE. AND THEN IT GOT WORSE, AND WORSE, AND...

KHK. WORSE.

I FOUGHT FOR THE KING IN PARLIAMENT'S WAR. **BIG** MISTAKE, THAT WAS. I GOT CARELESS. I GOT SOFT. LIKE THE COUNTRY...

I'VE HATED EVERY **SECOND** OF THE LAST EIGHTY YEARS. **EVERY BLOODY SECOND**. YOU KNOW THAT?

And you still wish to live? Do you not seek the respite of death?

ARE YOU CRAZY?

DEATH IS A MUG'S GAME. I GOT SO MUCH TO *LIVE* FOR.

"IT'S A LIVING.

"WONDERFUL SYSTEM, REALLY. WE TAKE ENGLISH COTTON GOODS TO AFRICA, GET A CARGO OF NEGROES, PACK 'EM IN LIKE SARDINES, SAME BOAT TAKES 'EM ACROSS THE ATLANTIC, COMES BACK WITH RAW COTTON, TOBACCO AND SUGAR.

"FUNNY THING IS, *I* SORT OF STARTED IT ALL. I MEAN, IT WAS ME THAT FUNDED JACK HAWKINS, WHAT, TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO, NOW..."

"You take pride in treating your fellow humans as less than animals?"

"LIKE I SAID, IT'S A LIVING."

"I HEARD SOMETHING *FUNNY*, THE OTHER WEEK.

"BLOKE SAID TO ME, HE SAID, 'IF ONLY THE FRENCH NOBLES HAD PLAYED CRICKET WITH THEIR MEN, THE WAY WE DO, THEY'D NEVER HAVE *HAD* THIS TROUBLE.'

"FIRST THE COLONIES, NOW FRANCE. YOU ASK ME, *THIS* COUNTRY'LL BE NEXT FOR A REVOLUTION. I BEEN SALTING MONEY AWAY ALL OVER THE WORLD."

"ODD'S LIFE--FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE I'LL BE OUT OF HERE LIKE *THAT*."

YE COBBETT ROOM

Your spirits seem much improved since our last encounter.

I SUPPOSE THEY HAVE.

I SAW *KING LEAR* YESTERDAY. MRS. SIDDONS AS GONERIL. THE IDIOTS HAD GIVEN IT A HAPPY ENDING.

That will not last. The Great Stories will always return to their original forms.

THAT LAD, WILL SHAKESPEARE. YOU DID SOME KIND OF *DEAL* WITH HIM, DIDN'T YOU?

Perhaps.

WHAT *KIND* OF DEAL? HIS *SOUL*?

Nothing so crude.

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS, NOW, I'VE BEEN MEETING YOU HERE, AND THERE'S SO MUCH I *STILL* DON'T KNOW...

WHO ARE YOU, TRULY? WHAT MANNER OF MAN ARE YOU?

WHAT'S YOUR *NAME*?

*LA!* I MIGHT ASK BOTH OF YOU THAT SAME QUESTION, GENTLEMEN.

PLEASE, DO NOT TROUBLE YOURSELVES TO RISE.

THESE ARE MICHAEL AND TOBIAS.

SMUGGLERS BY TRADE, ALTHOUGH, WITH AN EYE TO THEIR FORTUNES, THEY'RE ONLY TOO GLAD TO AUGMENT THEIR EARNINGS BY SLITTING THROATS FOR HIRE.

IF YOU MOVE THEY'LL SLIT YOURS.

I DO NOT--BELIEVE--I HAVE HAD--THE HONOR--OF YOUR ACQUAINTANCE--MADAME.

YOU DON'T *TALK* TILL MILADY SAYS AS SUCH, *WHORESON*.

NAY, LET THEM TALK, GOOD TOBY.

THEY TELL A TALE, IN THESE PARTS OF LONDON, THAT THE *DEVIL* AND THE *WANDERING JEW* MEET, ONCE IN EVERY CENTURY, IN A TAVERN.

TWO YEARS PAST, SEWN IN THE SHIRT OF A DEAD MAN, I FOUND ME A NICE DESCRIPTION OF THEIR LAST MEETING. *THIS* INN WAS NAMED, LIKEWISE THIS DAY.

FOR TWO YEARS, SIRS, I HAVE PLANNED OUR PRESENT *RENDEZ-VOUS*.

*WELL?* HAVE YOU NOTHING TO SAY?

I am no devil.

AND I'M NOT JEWISH.

*FIE!* WHAT MANNER OF CREATURES *ARE* YOU, THEN?

WHO WANTS TO KNOW?

I AM LADY JOHANNA CONSTANTINE.

YOU WILL FOLLOW ME, SIRS. MY COACH WAITS WITHOUT. I SEE THERE IS MUCH YOU BOTH CAN TELL ME.

I KNEW A *JACK* CONSTANTINE ONCE. *CUNNING MAN*. GOT HIMSELF KILLED BEFORE YOU WERE BORN. *LONG* TIME AGO, NOW.

SO MUCH I CAN LEARN...

No.

No, I think not.

NO! NOT THOU! THOU'RT GONE!

OH, 'TWAS NOT MY INTENT, HEAVEN BE MY WITNESS!

AH! I DURST NOT LOOK AT THEE!

WHAT DID YOU DO TO HER?

She has old ghosts, that I have shown to her.

Her kind walk amidst the flotsam of lives they have sacrificed, for their own purposes, till friendless and alone they needs must make the final sacrifice.

YEAH. JACK WAS LIKE THAT, TOO.

DIED IN A CHURCH-YARD IN ESSEX. NASTY BUSINESS. I WAS WITH HIM, BUT THE NIGHT-WALKERS LET ME BE, THOUGH THEY LEFT PRECIOUS LITTLE OF HIM.

I HAD NIGHTMARES ABOUT THAT NIGHT FOR TEN YEARS AFTER...

HE ALSO CAME TO ME, FOR KNOWLEDGE, IN QUEEN BESS'S DAY, BUT HE WAS A GREAT DEAL MORE CIVIL ABOUT ASKING FOR IT.

BOUGHT ME A DRINK FIRST, FOR A START.

Robert Gadling?

YES?

"It is a poor thing, to enslave another. I would suggest you find yourself a different line of business!"

EEK!

OHH! YOU GAVE ME A START, SIR! FER A SECOND I THOUGHT YOU WAS BLOODY JACK *HISSELF!*

No.

OOH, I KNOWED *THAT*, SIR. JUST JOSHING YOU.

SO, *HOW'D* YOU LIKE TO BUY A GAL A DRAIN OF PALE? THEN MAYBE A QUICK BUM-DANCE. GIVE US A HARD RIDE WIV YER CREAM-STICK.

I think not.

*PASTY-FACED PUSSY-COVE!* BET YOU IN'T GOT IT IN YOU ANYWAY, YOU *SKINNY CHICKALEARY!*

muuuurp...

THE *FIRST* I MET A *CORNET* WAS'N A *REGIMENT* OF *DRAGOONS*. I GAVE HIM WHAT HE *DIDN'T* LIKE, AND *STOLE* HIS SILVER *SPOONS*...

HULLO, MISTER. BUY A LADY A DRAIN OF PALE?

I SEE YOU HAD A RUN-IN WITH LUSHING LOU. IN HERE THEY CALL HER "THE HOSPITAL."

Really? Why?

BECAUSE SHE'S IN 'EM A GREAT DEAL, AND BECAUSE SHE'S SENT SO MANY MEN INTO THEM. ROTTEN THING, THE POX.

I see.

THIS AREA'S REALLY GONE DOWNHILL IN THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS, I STARTED COMING HERE A MONTH OR SO BACK.

DON'T WANT A REPEAT OF *LAST* TIME'S MESS, DO WE?

I saw her again, you know.

LADY JOHANNA?

Indeed. She undertook to fulfill a task for me. And succeeded admirably, I might add.

MM. I'VE NOTICED... I'M NOT THE *ONLY* ONE WHO DOESN'T DIE...

THERE'S A BLOKE AS CALLS HIMSELF *BLOOD* I'VE MET HALF-A-DOZEN TIMES NOW, ALTHOUGH HE DOESN'T ALWAYS REMEMBER ME.

AND THERE'S MAD HETTIE, DOWN ON OLD COMPTON STREET. BEEN THERE A HUNDRED TWENTY YEARS AT LEAST, TO MY KNOWLEDGE. MAD AS A COOT, BUT *SHE* ISN'T GOING TO DIE...

DEATH'S A CAPRICIOUS THING, INNIT?

Yes. Yes, she is.

Y'KNOW, I THINK I *KNOW* WHY WE MEET HERE, CENTURY AFTER CENTURY. IT'S *NOT* BECAUSE YOU WANT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A MAN DON'T DIE.

YOU'VE *SEEN* WHAT HAPPENS.

I DOUBT I'M ANY *WISER* THAN I WAS FIVE HUNDRED YEARS BACK. I'M *OLDER*. I'VE BEEN UP, AND BEEN DOWN, AND BEEN UP AGAIN.

HAVE I *LEARNED* OUGHT? I'VE LEARNED FROM MY *MISTAKES*, BUT I'VE HAD *MORE* TIME TO COMMIT *MORE* MISTAKES.

YOU WERE *RIGHT* ABOUT THE SLAVE TRADE. I CAN NEVER MAKE RESTITUTION FOR *THAT*, BUT...

LISTEN, I'VE SEEN *PEOPLE*, AND THEY DON'T CHANGE. NOT IN THE *IMPORTANT* THINGS.

I DOUBT I'LL *EVER* SEEK DEATH.

YOU'VE OBSERVED ALL THAT. BUT YOU KNEW IT FROM THE *START*.

I THINK YOU'RE HERE FOR SOMETHING ELSE.

And what might that be?

FRIENDSHIP.

You DARE? You dare imply that I might befriend a mortal? That one of my kind might NEED companionship?

I THINK YOU'RE *LONELY*.

You dare to call me lonely?

YES. YES I DO.

TELL YOU WHAT. *I'LL* BE HERE IN A HUNDRED YEARS' TIME. IF *YOU'RE* HERE THEN, TOO--IT'LL BE BECAUSE WE'RE *FRIENDS*. *NO* OTHER REASON.

RIGHT?

...RIGHT?

...THATCHER'S BLOODY POLL TAX. THERE'S GOING TO BE A REVOLUTION IF THEY TRY TO PUSH IT THROUGH...

...I SEE IT, THE LABOUR MOVEMENT DIED WITH THE MINER'S STRIKE...

...ALL THE SIGNS ARE THERE, IN THE BIBLE. IT'LL BE THE END OF THE WORLD VERY SOON...

...NO RESPECT FOR LAW AND ORDER...

...OF COURSE AIDS ISN'T GOD'S WAY OF PUNISHING PEOPLE, DARREN. DON'T BE A PILLOCK...

...UP HER DRESS, AND SHE SAYS, "ARE YOU HUNTING FOR RABBITS AGAIN, VICAR?"

...MAKE MORE ON THE DOLE THAN THEY WOULD FROM AN HONEST DAY'S WORK...

I...

I WASN'T SURE YOU'D BE COMING.

Really?

I have always heard it was impolite to keep one's friends waiting.

Would you like a drink?

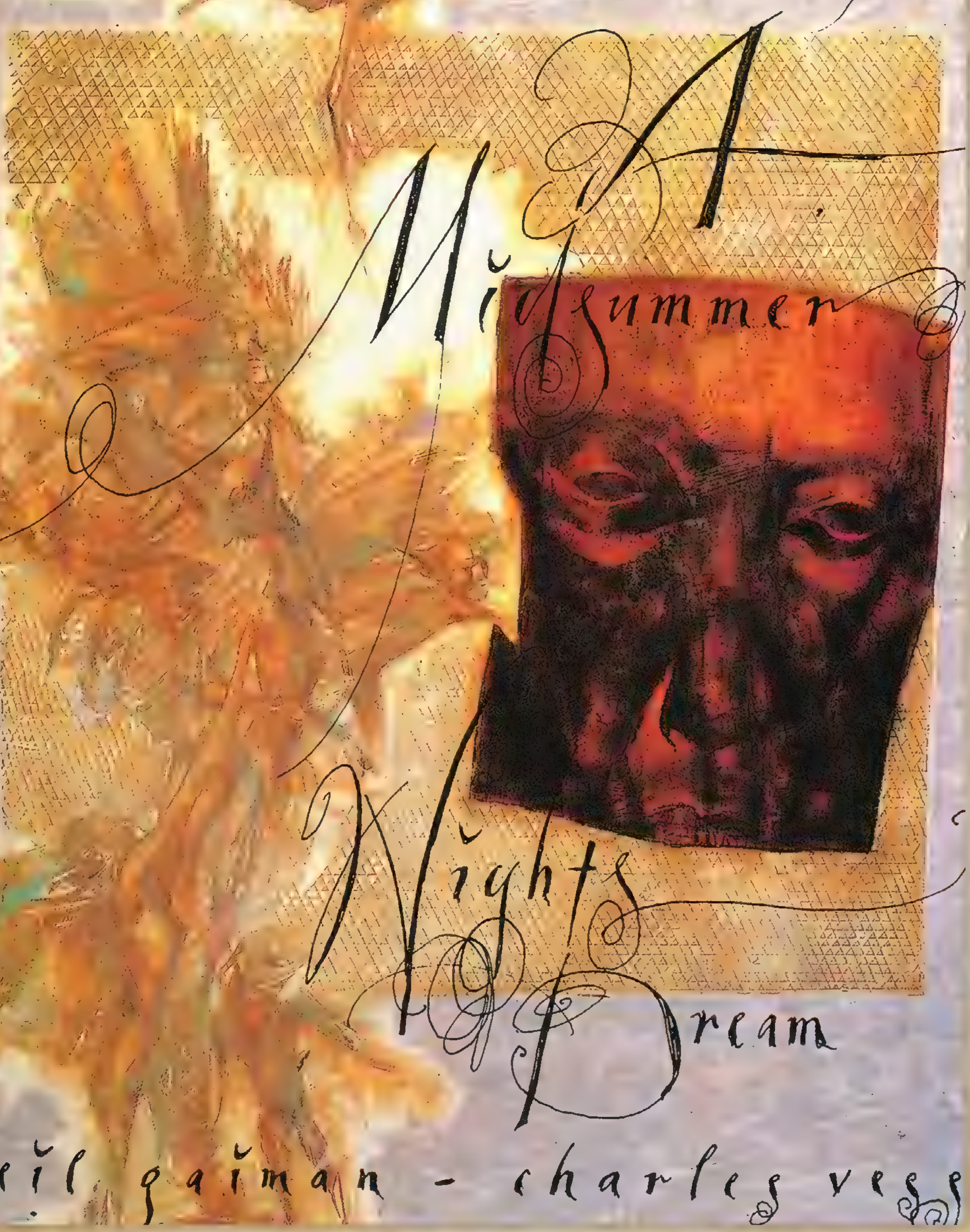
NEXT: COLLECTORS

NO. 19
SEP 1990

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

# the SANDMAN™

## Dream Country



## Midsummer Night's Dream

neil gaiman - charles vess

JUNE 23RD, 1593.

FATHER? HOW LONG UNTIL WE GET TO AN INN? MY LEGS ARE TIRED OF WALKING.

HMMN? I NEVER SAID WE WERE GOING TO AN INN, HAMNET.

BUT FATHER, YOU *SAID* THAT WE WOULD BE PERFORMING THE *NEW* PLAY TONIGHT. WHERE SHALL WE PLAY IT IF NOT IN AN *INN*?

I HAVE NO IDEA. BUT WE WILL KNOW SOON. KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD AHEAD, LAD.

BUT *FATHER*...

FATHER! I CAN SEE A MAN ON THE WAY, THERE!

INDEED.

LOOK. WILL *HE* BE OUR AUDIENCE?

I FEAR SO, LAD.

*WILL!* A MOMENT OF YOUR TIME.

YES, KEMP?

I HAVE AN *IDEA!* HOW WOULD IT BE IF I WERE TO BE EATING A *PORK PIE*, IN THE FIRST SCENE? AND THEN, I COULD *SIT* ON IT, DURING BOB ARMIN'S SPEECH.

I THINK NOT.

BUT IT WOULD MAKE THEM *LAUGH*.

IT WOULD *ALSO* MAKE THEM LAUGH IF YOU BROKE WIND LOUDLY, KEMP. *PLEASE*-- JUST THE LINES AND JESTS I HAVE WRIT FOR YOU. WE PERFORM TONIGHT.

HOLD FAST! WE STOP HERE, MY FRIENDS.

HAMNET, GO AND WAIT WITH CONDELL AND THE OTHER BOYS.

BUT FATHER...

I WROTE IT AS YOU TOLD ME, LORD. IT IS THE BEST THAT I HAVE WRITTEN, TO THIS DATE.

I am sure it is!

You have come, then, Will Shekespear.

It is all ready?

SO... WE ARE HERE ON YOUR COMMAND, MY LORD, ON MIDSUMMER'S EVE, BY THE LONG MAN OF WILMINGTON. AN ODD CHOICE OF A PLACE FOR US TO PERFORM...

Odd? Wendel's Mound was a theatre before your race came to this island.

BEFORE THE NORMANS?

Before the humans.

WILL! WHAT IS HAPPENING? WHO IS THIS MAN?

THIS IS THE GENTLEMAN I TOLD YOU OF, RICHARD. IT WAS HE WHO COMMISSIONED THE NEW PLAY.

AH. I AM RICHARD BURBAGE, THE LEADING MAN OF LORD STRANGE'S MEN, AND HEAD OF OUR COMPANY. AND YOU ARE...?

I am your patron, for this play. You must Act well tonight, Richard Burbage.

SIRRAH--I NEVER GIVE OF A PERFORMANCE THAT IS LESS THAN MY BEST. ALTHOUGH THIS BARBAROUS FARRAGO OF FAIRY-TALE HODGEPOTCH IS A MERE CROWD-PLEASER AT BEST.

TRAGEDY IS MY FORTÉ. I HAVE TOLD WILL TO MAKE ME A LOVER MOST TRAGICAL, AND WHEN WE RETURN TO LONDON, I WILL MAKE THEM WEEP TRUE TEARS.

I have no doubts of your ability, Master Burbage.

I SEE YOU UNDERSTAND THE THEATRE, MESSIRE. LEAD US TO YOUR HALL, THEN, AND WE SHALL PERFORM OUR COMEDY FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT.

I have no hall, not that I will take you to.

Here, Richard Burbage, on the downs of Sussex, this will be your stage.

BUT--

WE WILL PLAY IT ON THE GREEN SWARD, RICHARD, JUST AS WE HAVE REHEARSED IT IN FIELDS AND GLADES. THIS IS A NATURAL STAGE. AND THE EVENING IS WARM, AND THE LIGHT WILL LAST US.

WE OWE--I OWE MUCH TO THIS MAN.

HMMPH.

BESTIR YOURSELVES THERE, LUMPKINS! AND INTO YOUR COSTUMES! WE PERFORM THE PLAY HERE, ON THIS GREEN, WITHIN THE HOUR.

I CAN'T *WAIT* UNTIL WE'RE BACK IN THE SMOKE. I *LOATHE* THESE PROVINCIAL TOURS.

AS SOON AS THE PLAGUE SEASON IS OVER, WE'LL BE BACK AT THE CURTAIN, AND THE CROSS KEYS, AND YOU CAN MAKE UP TO *ALL* YOUR ADMIRERS AGAIN...

COW.

AT LEAST I *HAVE* ADMIRERS.

MY FATHER SAYS IT'S NOT THE PLAGUE THAT'S THE PROBLEM, IT'S THE CITY ALDERMEN.

YES, DO ME UP IN THE BACK, THERE'S A LOVE.

DID YOUR FATHER SAY WHO THAT STRANGER IS? OR WHO WE'LL BE PERFORMING FOR?

NO.

HOW DO I LOOK?

YOU LOOK *VERY* PRETTY.

THANK YOU, HAMNET. FOR THAT, YOU SHALL HAVE A STRAWBERRY.

WHO HAS MOVED THE ASS'S HEAD?

WHERE'S THE LANTHORN? AND THE STICKS?

MY BEARD! BY TH' LORD JESU! Y'ART WEARING MY BEARD!

THE KING DOTH KEEP HIS REVELS HERE TONIGHT MARK NOT-- I'FAITH --*TAKE HEED* THE QUEEN COME NOT WITHIN HIS SIGHT...

SIRE, ALL IS PREPARED, AND WE POOR PLAYERS BUT AWAIT OUR CUES.

ARE OUR AUDIENCE ON THEIR WAY?

They wait on the other side of the hill, needing only the unclosing of a portal to make their way to us.

I will call them. Go tell your fellow players to make ready to begin.

Wendel! Open your door.

# A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Written by NEIL GAIMAN, with additional material taken from the play by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. Art by CHARLES VESS.
Colored by STEVE OLIFF Lettered by TODD KLEIN. Assistant Editor TOM PEYER. Editor KAREN BERGER.
featuring characters created by GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG.

HO HO HO! THEY SAY THE SEVEN ENDLESS ARE FOREVER, MIGHTY DREAM. YOU AND THE OTHER SIX, UNTIL THE DEATH OF TIME ITSELF.

WHAT SAY YOU TO THAT, KING OF THE RIDDLE-REALMS?

ROBIN GOODFELLOW, MIND YOUR MANNERS. WE ARE MY LORD SHAPER'S GUESTS, AND I WILL *NOT* HAVE HIM INSULTED BY A HOBGOBLIN.

Welcome to you, Auberon of Dom-Daniel, and to you also, Lady Titania.

Nay, good Auberon. It is a fool's prerogative to utter truths that no one else will speak.

Please, take your seats. The diversion I have arranged begins forthwith.

*GREETINGS*, SHAPER. YOUR INVITATION HAS PROVOK'D MUCH SPECULATION AMONGST OUR PEOPLE. I MUST CONFESS WE THOUGHT WE WERE *QUIT* OF THIS PLANE FOR *EVER*.

Is anything forever?

FATHER--THEY ARE ALL ASSEMBLED.

VERY WELL.

LET *THIS* OUR FIRST PERFORMANCE BE OUR *BEST*, MY FRIENDS. *WILL KEMP--NO* BUSINESS WE HAVE NOT REHEARSED. *HENRY CONDELL*, REMEMBER THAT YOU PLAY A *QUEEN*, NOT A *STRUMPET*.

HIPPOLYTA--PHILOSTRATE--*PLACES*.

AND...BREAK A LEG.

...

"NOW, FAIR HIPPOLYTA..."

***NOW,*** FAIR HIPPOLYTA, OUR NUPTIAL HOUR DRAWS ON APACE; ***FOUR*** HAPPY DAYS BRING IN ANOTHER MOON: BUT ***OHH,*** METHINKS HOW ***SLOW*** THE OLD MOON WANES!

...AWAKE THE PERT AND NIMBLE SPIRIT OF MIRTH; TURN MELANCHOLY FORTH TO FUNERALS -- THE ***PALE COMPANION*** IS ***NOT*** FOR OUR POMP.

...WAR, DEATH, OR SICKNESS DID LAY SIEGE TO IT, MAKING IT MOMENTANY AS ANY SOUND, SWIFT AS A SHADOW, SHORT AS ANY DREAM, BRIEF AS THE LIGHTNING IN THE COLLIED NIGHT...

IT IS WELL-SPOKEN, SIR. YOUR MORTAL AUTHOR FASHIONS WELL.

I thank you, lady. And I, too, am gratified.

WHAT'S THIS? WHAT MEANS THIS PRANCING, CHATTERING MORTAL FLESH? METHINKS PERHAPS THE DREAM-LORD BROUGHT US HERE TO FEED?

NAR. ISSA WOSSNAME. YOU KNOW. THINGIE. A PLAY. THEY'RE PRETENDIN' THINGS.

THAT ONE UP THERE, LYSANDER, HE LOVES HER, HERMIA, BUT HER DAD WANTS HER TO MARRY THE OTHER ONE, DEMETRIUS, SEE?

NOT REALLY. THESE ARE MORTAL MATING RITUALS?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT, SKARROW. BUT ISSA LOVE STORY. NOT DINNER.

THE MORE I HATE, THE MORE HE FOLLOWS ME.

THE MORE I LOVE, THE MORE HE HATETH ME.

HIS FOLLY, HELENA, IS NO FAULT OF MINE.

NONE BUT YOUR BEAUTY-- WOULD THAT FAULT WERE MINE!

...OUR PLAY IS THE MOST LAMENTABLE COMEDY AND MOST CRUEL DEATH OF PYRAMUS AND THISBE.

A VERY GOOD PIECE OF WORK, I ASSURE YOU, AND A MERRY. NOW, GOOD PETER QUINCE, CALL FORTH YOUR ACTORS BY THE SCROLL. MASTERS, SPREAD YOURSELVES!

ANSWER AS I CALL YOU. NICK BOTTOM, THE WEAVER?

READY! NAME WHAT PART I AM FOR, AND PROCEED.

...BUT MASTER WILL, THEY ARE NOT HUMAN! I SAW BOGGARTS, AND TROLLS, AND, AND NIXIES, AND THINGS OF EVERY MANNER AND KIND.

AYE, AND THEY ARE ALSO OUR AUDIENCE, TOMMY. CALM YOURSELF.

OHH... HOW I DO ACHE TO MAKE A SPORT OF THEM.

NO. DO YOU BEHAVE, MY SERVANT.

YOU ARE MY KING; YOUR WHIM IS MY COMMAND.

HO HO HO!

WHAT IS THISBE? A WANDERING KNIGHT?

IT IS THE LADY THAT PYRAMUS MUST LOVE.

NAY, FAITH, LET ME NOT PLAY A WOMAN -- I HAVE A BEARD COMING!

I HAD FORGOTTEN ME, THESE CENTURIES IN FAERIE, WHAT RARE CREATURES MORTALS COULD BE...

...AND WHAT RARE FUN.

LET ME PLAY THE LION TOO! I WILL ROAR THAT I WILL DO ANY MAN'S HEART GOOD TO HEAR ME. I WILL ROAR THAT I WILL MAKE THE DUKE SAY,

"LET HIM ROAR AGAIN!"

"LET HIM RROOOAARRR AGAIN!"

HA HA HA HA

AHA

HA HA HA

EITHER *I* MISTAKE YOUR SHAPE AND MAKING *QUITE*, OR ELSE *YOU* ARE THAT *SHREWD* AND *KNAVISH* SPRITE CALLED *ROBIN GOODFELLOW*:

ARE YOU NOT *HE* THAT FRIGHTS THE MAIDENS OF THE VILLAGERY...?

IT'S *YOU*! HOBGOBLIN, THAT ACTOR PERSONATES *YOU*!

THOU SPEAK'ST ARIGHT: I *AM* THAT MERRY WANDERER OF THE NIGHT.

"*I AM THAT MERRY WANDERER OF THE NIGHT*"? I AM THAT GIGGLING-DANGEROUS-TOTALLY-BLOODY-PSYCHOTIC-MENACE-TO-LIFE-AND-LIMB, MORE LIKE IT.

SHUSH, PEASEBLOSSOM. THE PUCK MIGHT *HEAR* YOU!

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT I HEARD THIS TALE SUNG ONCE, IN OLD GREECE, BY A BOY WITH A LYRE.

Indeed, my lady?

YOU ARE A DEEP ONE. I WOULD I COULD FATHOM YOUR MOTIVES...?

Later, lady. Watch the play.

ILL-MET BY *MOONLIGHT*, PROUD TITANIA.

*WHAT*, JEALOUS OBERON? FAIRY, SKIP HENCE. I HAVE FORSWORN HIS *BED* AND *COMPANY*.

*TARRY, RASH WANTON! AM I NOT THY LORD?*

...BUT SHE, BEING MORTAL OF THAT BOY DID *DIE*, AND FOR HER SAKE I DO REAR UP HER *BOY*; AND FOR HER SAKE I WILL *NOT* PART WITH HIM.

...THE NEXT THING THEN SHE, WAKING, LOOKS UPON--BE IT ON LION, BEAR, OR WOLF, OR BULL, ON MEDDLING MONKEY, OR ON BUSY APE--

SHE SHALL *PURSUE* IT WITH THE SOUL OF *LOVE*.

THAT CHILD-- THE ONE PLAYING THE INDIAN BOY. WHO *IS* HE?

He is the son of Will Shekespear, the author of this play.

A *BEAUTIFUL* CHILD. MOST PLEASANT. WILL I MEET HIM?

I have told Shekespear to call an interval, half-way through the play; and you will meet him then.

*AHH*. 'TIS UNCOMMON FOR YOU TO HAVE SUCH WAKING COMMERCE WITH MORTAL KIND...?

We came to an... arrangement, four years back. I'd give him what he thinks he most desires-- and in return he'd write two plays for me.

This is the first of them.

I UNDERSTAND.

SO.

WE HAVE FOUR LOVERS HEADING FOR THE WOOD. WE HAVE CLOWNS, WHO WOULD BE ACTORS; AND ACTORS PORTRAYING ME AND MY ROYAL CONSORT.

IN THE OLD TALE THERE WAS A LOVE POTION, THAT LEFT THE GODDESS RUTTING WITH AN ASS...

AH YES. THE LOVE POTION.

STAY-- THOUGH THOU KILL ME, SWEET DEMETRIUS.

I CHARGE THEE HENCE-- AND DO NOT *HAUNT* ME THUS!

O, WILT THOU DARKLING LEAVE ME? DO *NOT* GO!

STAY, ON THY PERIL. I ALONE WILL GO.

*HANG* ON. SO THERE'S THIS LOVE POTION, AND HE'S GOIN' TO MAKE HER MAJESTY LOVE SOMETHING NASTY... BUT WHERE DO THE YOUNG MORTALS COME INTO IT?

DON'T YOU *EVER* LISSEN? *HE'S* PUT THE POTION ON WOSSNAME, *LYSANDER*, RIGHT? *NOW HE'S* GOING TO FALL IN LOVE WITH *HER*, THE SKINNY ONE.

HUH?

YOU SEE, THE PUCK THOUGHT *HE* WAS THE OTHER ONE, SO WHEN--

CAN'T YOU BE QUIET? *SOME* OF US ARE TRYING TO LISTEN.

NOT HERMIA BUT HELENA I LOVE--WHO WOULD NOT CHANGE A RAVEN FOR A DOVE?

THE PLAY GOES *WELL*, WILL. *HOWEVER*, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WE ARE PERFORMING FOR SIMPLE APPLAUSE. AND EVEN WE GLORIOUS VAGABONDS MUST *EAT*.

WE SHALL HAVE AN INTERVAL, AT THE END OF KEMP AND CONDELL'S FIRST SCENE. WE CAN TALK OF SILVER THEN.

*AY ME!* FOR *PITY!* WHAT A *DREAM* WAS *HERE!* LYSANDER, LOOK HOW I DO QUAKE WITH FEAR!

METHOUGHT A SERPENT ATE MY *HEART* AWAY, AND YOU STOOD *SMILING* AT HIS CRUEL PREY.

LYSANDER...?

YOU MUST BE VERY PROUD OF YOUR FATHER, HAMNET.

PROUD? I SUPPOSE...

HE'S VERY DISTANT, TOMMY. HE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE HE'S REALLY *THERE* ANY MORE. NOT REALLY. IT'S LIKE HE'S SOMEWHERE ELSE. ANYTHING THAT HAPPENS HE JUST MAKES *STORIES* OUT OF IT.

I'M LESS REAL TO HIM THAN ANY OF THE CHARACTERS IN HIS PLAYS.

MOTHER SAYS HE'S *CHANGED* IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER HIM ANY OTHER WAY. *JUDITH*-- SHE'S MY TWIN SISTER-- SHE ONCE JOKED THAT IF I *DIED*, HE'D JUST WRITE A *PLAY* ABOUT IT.

"HAMNET."

COME ON, LADDIE. I AM BACK *ON* IN A MINUTE!

MOTHER *ORDERED* HIM TO HAVE ME FOR THIS SUMMER. IT'S THE *FIRST* TIME I'VE SEEN HIM FOR *MORE* THAN A *WEEK* AT A TIME, THAT I REMEMBER.

BUT WE LIVE FIVE DAYS' RIDE FROM LONDON, UP IN WARWICKSHIRE, AND SEE HIM SELDOM.

ALL THAT MATTERS TO HIM...

I WOULD BE *PROUD* OF HIM, IF HE WERE *MY* FATHER.

...ALL THAT MATTERS IS THE STORIES.

I'LL FOLLOW YOU, I'LL LEAD YOU ABOUT, AROUND, THROUGH BUSH, THROUGH BRAKE, THROUGH BRIAR.

SOMETIME A *HORSE* I'LL BE, SOMETIME A *HOUND*--

--A *HOG*, A HEADLESS *BEAR*, SOMETIME A *FIRE*...

*WHY* DO THEY RUN AWAY?

*THIS* IS A *KNAVERY* OF THEM TO MAKE *ME* A-FEARED!

THIS IS *MAGNIFICENT*--AND IT IS *TRUE*!

IT NEVER *HAPPENED*; YET IT IS *STILL* TRUE. WHAT MAGIC ART IS THIS?

WHAT *ANGEL* WAKES ME FROM MY FLOWERY BED?

ALL RIGHT. WHAT'S SO FUNNY ABOUT HAVING A DONKEY'S HEAD? EH? *EH?*

*GO* ON, *TELL* ME WHAT'S SO *FUNNY?*

...I LOVE THEE.

METHINKS, MISTRESS, YOU SHOULD HAVE *LITTLE* REASON FOR *THAT.*

AND YET, TO SAY THE TRUTH, *REASON* AND *LOVE* KEEP LITTLE COMPANY TOGETHER NOWADAYS.

*BESIDES*--IF YOU ASK *ME, NONE* OF THOSE *WOMEN* ARE WOMEN AT ALL. THEY'RE MALES. *I* CAN TELL.

HUMAN MALES TASTE MORE LIKE *RABBIT* THAN THE FEMALES --AND THEY *STICK* IN YOUR *TEETH*. OH YES.

DID HE SAY "PEASEBLOSSOM"? THAT'S *MY* NAME! WHAT DID HE *SAY?*

ALSO, THE MALES ARE *HAIRIER*, AND THEY LACK THE FLESH ON THEIR *CHESTS*.

WILL YOU *SHUT UP?* I CAN'T HEAR A *THING* WITH YOU RABBITIN' ON LIKE THAT ALL THE TIME!

GENTLES, THERE WILL NOW BE INTERVAL, FOR YOU TO FRESHEN, OR TO STRETCH YOUR LEGS.

OUR TALE BEGINS AGAIN TEN MINUTES HENCE.

YOU ARE THE AUTHOR OF THIS AMUSEMENT? IT STRIKES STRANGE MUSIC, SIR. METHINKS I SHOULD BE DISPLEASED, YET I AM NOT.

IT IS *FINE* WORK. IT IS MOST WORTHY WORK.

AND, UM, *THESE* -- NO -- *THOSE* THINGS DO BEST PLEASE ME THAT BEFALL PREPOSTEROUSLY.

AND PUCK MEETS PUCK -- IS *THAT* NOT PREPOSTEROUS? AND WHAT'S *THIS* I SPY? YOUR LINES?

OHO-HO-*HO*, I DO SEE SPORT HERE.

MY LORD. I AM THE, UH, *LEADER* OF THESE, LORD STRANGE'S MEN. AND THOUGH IT IS A *JOY* FOR US TO PERFORM, WE ALSO NEED TO *PAY* OUR WAY THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE.

YOU TALK OF *GOLD*?

WELL, *YES*...

GOLD. YOU ASK *AUBERON* OF THE *FAY* FOR *GOLD*...?

THEN YOU MUST HAVE YOUR GOLD, ACTOR.

WHY, *THANK YOU*, LORD! THIS WILL BE *MORE* THAN SUFFICIENT!

YOU PLAYED ME WELL, MORTAL. BUT *I* HAVE PLAYED ME FOR *TIME* OUT OF *MIND*.

AND *I* DO ROBIN GOODFELLOW BETTER THAN *ANYONE*.

They are well pleased, as am I, good Will. It is finely crafted, and it will last.

ARE YOU SATISFIED?

I am.

IF YOU ARE SATISFIED, THEN OUR BARGAIN IS HALF-CONCLUDED.

*ONE* OTHER PLAY THEN, CELEBRATING DREAMS, AT THE *END* OF MY CAREER...

YES, "*THE DREAM*" IS THE BEST THING I HAVE WRITTEN; AND IT PLAYS WELL. NOT EVEN KIT MARLOWE WILL BE ABLE TO GAINSAY THAT.

You have not heard?

Marlowe is dead, Will. He died in Deptford, three weeks back, of a knife wound to the head.

WHO *KILLED* HIM? INGRAM FRASER, I'LL BE BOUND. *CECIL'S* MAN.

Yes.

OH, KIT. I *TOLD* YOU NOT TO PLAY WITH POLITICS.

WHY DID YOU TELL THIS TO ME NOW? *THIS* NEWS COULD HAVE WAITED.

I did not realize it would hurt you so.

MARLOWE WAS MY *FRIEND*.

YOU DID NOT *REALIZE*? NO, YOUR KIND CARE NOT FOR HUMAN LIVES.

DARK STRANGER, *ALREADY* I HALF-REGRET OUR BARGAIN. BUT COME, OUR NIGHT'S COMEDY BEGINS ONCE MORE.

...AND BONNY DRAGONS THAT WILL COME WHEN YOU DO CALL THEM AND FLY YOU THROUGH THE HONEYED AMBER SKIES.

THERE IS NO NIGHT IN *MY* LAND, PRETTY BOY, AND IT IS FOREVER SUMMER'S TWILIGHT.

My lady? The play will start anon.

THANK YOU, DREAM LORD.

HOW NOW, MAD SPIRIT? WHAT *NIGHT-RULE* NOW ABOUT THIS HAUNTED GROVE?

MY *MISTRESS* WITH A *MONSTER* IS IN LOVE!

THIS MUST BE OUR *LAST* VISIT TO THIS EARTH, SHAPER.

THINGS HAVE CHANGED, AND WILL CHANGE *MORE;* AND GAIA NO LONGER WELCOMES US AS ONCE SHE DID.

I know. And I regret it much.

BUT *YOU* WILL *ALWAYS* BE WELCOME IN *OUR* LAND, DREAM LORD. THE GATES TO FAERIE ARE NEVER *FULLY* CLOSED. COME WHEN YOU WISH.

Perhaps one day I will.

DICK COWLEY ACTS WELL TONIGHT. I HAVE NEVER SEEN HIM FEIGN A FINER PUCK.

HE SEEMS ALMOST TWO-THIRDS HOBGOBLIN.

father?

NOT NOW, CHILD. I MUST SEE THIS.

SHE WAS SUCH A *PRETTY* LADY, FATHER, AND SHE SAID SUCH THINGS TO ME.

*LORD,* WHAT *FOOLS* THESE *MORTALS* BE!

COME, SIT THEE DOWN UPON THIS FLOWERY BED, WHILE I THY AMIABLE CHEEKS DO COY, AND STICK MUSKROSES IN THY SLEEK, SMOOTH HEAD, --

--AND *KISS* THY FAIR LARGE EARS, MY GENTLE JOY.

WHERE'S *PEASEBLOSSOM*?

READY!

SCRATCH MY HEAD, PEASEBLOSSOM.

DID YOU *HEAR* THAT? *PEASEBLOSSOM!* THAT'S MEANT TO BE *ME*, THAT IS! ISS NUFFINK *LIKE* ME! *NUFFINK!*

IT *ISN'T* YOU, PEASEBLOSSOM. NOW BE QUIET.

*YER.* YOU SHUT YOUR FACE, PEASE.

ISSA *WOSSNAME*. TRAVELOGUE? NAH. *TRAVESTY*. THAT'S IT.

*I'M* THE ONLY PEASEBLOSSOM AMONG THE FAY. "*SCRATCH HIS HEAD*". *I'LL* GIVE HIM SCRATCH HIS BLEEDIN' HEAD!

PEASEBLOSSOM...

...AND *NOW* I HAVE THE BOY I WILL *UNDO* THIS HATEFUL IMPERFECTION OF HER EYES.

AND, GENTLE PUCK, TAKE THIS TRANSFORMED SCALP FROM OFF THE HEAD OF THIS ATHENIAN SWAIN.

*MMMph! MUMUMPH MM MPPH!*

LIKE I SAID. I'M NOT HAVIN' YOU SPOILIN' IT FOR EVERYONE.

I HAVE HAD... A MOST *RARE* VISION.

I HAVE HAD A *DREAM*... PAST THE WIT OF MAN TO SAY WHAT WIT IT WAS.

MAN IS BUT AN... ASS... IF HE GO ABOUT TO EXPOUND THIS DREAM.

METHOUGHT I WAS... THERE IS NO *MAN* CAN TELL WHAT.

I wonder, Titania. I wonder if I have done right.

And I wonder why I wonder. Will is a willing vehicle for the great stories.

Through him they will live for an age of man; and his words will echo down through time. It is what he wanted.

But he did not understand the price. Mortals never do.

They only see the prize, their heart's desire, their dream... But the price of getting what you want, is getting what once you wanted.

And had I told him? Had he understood? What then? It would have made no difference.

Have I done right, Titania? Have I done right?

HM? OH, IT IS A *WONDERFUL* PLAY, LORD SHAPER. MOST ENCHANTING AND FINE.

THE *EYE* OF MAN HATH *NOT HEARD*, THE *EAR* OF MAN HATH NOT *SEEN*, MAN'S *HAND* IS NOT ABLE TO *TASTE*, HIS *TONGUE* TO *CONCEIVE*, NOR HIS *HEART* TO *REPORT* WHAT MY DREAM WAS.

'TIS STRANGE, MY THESEUS, THAT THESE LOVERS SPEAK OF.

MORE *STRANGE* THAN *TRUE*.

I NEVER MAY BELIEVE THESE ANTIQUE FABLES, NOR THESE *FAIRY* TOYS. LOVERS AND MADMEN HAVE SUCH *SEETHING* BRAINS...

THE *LUNATIC*, THE *LOVER*, AND THE *POET* ARE OF IMAGINATION ALL COMPACT. *ONE* SEES MORE DEVILS THAN VAST HELL CAN HOLD.

*THAT* IS THE *MADMAN*.

THE LOVER, ALL AS FRANTIC, SEES HELEN'S BEAUTY IN A BROW OF EGYPT.

THE POET'S EYE, IN A FINE *FRENZY* ROLLING, DOTH GLANCE FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH, FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN.

AND, AS *IMAGINATION* BODIES FORTH THE FORMS OF THINGS UNKNOWN...

...THE POET'S PEN TURNS THEM TO SHAPES, AND GIVES TO AIRY *NOTHING* A LOCAL HABITATION AND A *NAME*.

"THE RIOT OF THE TIPSY BACCHANALS, TEARING THE THRACIAN SINGER IN THEIR RAGE?"

*THAT* IS AN *OLD* DEVICE, AND IT WAS PLAYED WHEN I FROM THEBES CAME *LAST* A *CONQUEROR*.

OH *KISS* ME THROUGH THE HOLE OF THIS VILE WALL!

I KISS THE WALL'S *HOLE*, NOT YOUR LIPS AT ALL!

You have asked me why I asked you back to this plane, to see this entertainment.

I... During your stay on this Earth the faerie have afforded me much diversion, and entertainment.

Now you have left, for your own haunts. And I would repay you all for the amusement. And more:

They shall not forget you. That was important to me: that King Auberon and Queen Titania will be remembered by mortals, until this age is gone.

WE THANK YOU, SHAPER. BUT THIS DIVERSION, ALTHOUGH PLEASANT, IS NOT *TRUE*.

THINGS NEVER HAPPENED THUS.

Oh, but it IS true.

Things need not have happened to be true. Tales and dreams are the shadow-truths that will endure when mere facts are dust and ashes, and forgot.

IF YOU SAY SO, DREAM LORD. WE ARE *HONORED*.

THIS IS THE *SILLIEST* STUFF THAT *EVER* I HEARD.

THE *BEST* IN THIS KIND ARE BUT *SHADOWS*; AND THE *WORST* ARE NO *WORSE*, IF *IMAGINATION* AMEND THEM.

THE IRON TONGUE OF MIDNIGHT HATH TOLLED TWELVE. LOVERS, TO BED; 'TIS ALMOST FAIRY TIME.

I FEAR WE SHALL OUTSLEEP THE COMING MORN...

...WE FAIRIES, THAT DO RUN BY THE TRIPLE HECATE'S TEAM, FOLLOWING DARKNESS LIKE A DREAM, NOW ARE FROLIC.

*COME*, MY PUCK, AND *LEAVE* THIS FOOLISHNESS, FOR NOW THE TIME FOR OUR *RETURN* DRAWS NEAR.

ALREADY WENDEL OPENS UP HIS GATE.

WHAT, *LEAVE*, MY LORD?

WHEN THERE ARE *MORTALS* TO *CONFUSTICATE* AND *VEX*?

GO YOU ALL. YOUR PUCK WILL STAY--THE LAST HOBGOBLIN IN A DREARY WORLD. HO HO *HO*!

Goodbye, King and Queen. Fare well, fair folk. Go in peace.

*THAT* IS NOT COWLEY! WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

WHAT'S *HAPPENING*?

IF WE *SHADOWS* HAVE OFFENDED, THINK BUT *THIS*, AND ALL IS *MENDED*:

THAT YOU HAVE BUT *SLUMBER'D* HERE, WHILE THESE *VISIONS* DID *APPEAR*.

AND THIS WEAK AND IDLE THEME, NO MORE YIELDING THAN A *DREAM*. GENTLES--DO NOT REPREHEND. IF *YOU* PARDON-- *WE* WILL MEND.

AND--AS I AM AN *HONEST* PUCK, IF WE HAVE UNEARNED *LUCK* NOW TO 'SCAPE THE SERPENTS' TONGUE, WE WILL MAKE AMENDS, ERE LONG.

ELSE THE PUCK A LIAR CALL.

SO GOOD *NIGHT* UNTO YOU *ALL*.

GIVE ME YOUR *HANDS* IF WE BE FRIENDS

AND

*ROBIN*

SHALL

*RESTORE*

AMENDS

OHH...

WAS IT A DREAM, THEN, RICHARD?

A *DREAM*, WILL? *NO!*

FOR SEE-- A POUCH OF GOLD.

A POUCH OF YELLOW LEAVES.

BUT-- WE WERE *CHEATED!*

NO, FOR WE WERE PAID FULL WELL. *WHICH* OTHER TROUPE HAS PLAYED TO SUCH AN AUDIENCE?

*FATHER!* I HAD SUCH A STRANGE DREAM. THERE WAS A GREAT LADY, WHO WANTED ME TO GO WITH HER TO A DISTANT LAND...

FOOLISH FANCIES, BOY.

ON THE CART TODAY, YOU MUST PRACTICE YOUR HANDWRITING. PERHAPS YOU COULD WRITE A *LETTER* TO YOUR MOTHER, OR TO JUDITH.

COME ON, YOU *VAGABONDS!* STIR YOURSELVES!

WE CAN BE IN *LEWES* BY LATE AFTERNOON, AND THERE'S AN INN I KNOW WILL BE *GLAD* OF A TROUPE OF ACTORS WITH A NEW COMEDY TO SHOW...

HAMNET SHAKESPEARE DIED IN 1596, AGED ELEVEN.

ROBIN GOODFELLOW'S PRESENT WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN.

DC

VERTIGO

NO. 75
MAR 96

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

# THE SANDMAN

## THE TEMPEST

NEIL GAIMAN AND CHARLES VESS

THE SANDMAN

Actus Primus. Scena Prima.

A Tempestuous noise of Thunder and Lightning heard.

Enter a Ship-master and a Boatswain.

Mast. Boatswain.

Boats. Here, master: what cheer?

Master. Good: Speak to th' mariners: fall to't yarely, or we run ourselves aground: bestir, bestir.

NOVEMBER, 1610.

FATHER? THERE IS A STORM BREWING.

WHAT'S THAT, JUDITH? A STORM? YES...

THERE *WOULD* BE A STORM.

YOU'RE WRITING, FATHER.

MM. THAT I AM.

WHAT WOULD YOU BE A-WRITING, FATHER?

A PLAY, JUDITH.

NOT A FUNNY POEM?

A PLAY.

AND WILL YOU *READ* IT TO ME, FATHER, WHEN IT IS DONE?

AND MAKE THE VOICES ALSO?

AYE, WHEN 'TIS DONE.

MOTHER SAID YOU'D NOT BE WRITING ANY MORE.

SHE'LL BE RIGHT ABOUT *THAT* SOON ENOUGH.

WHAT'S IT ABOUT, THEN, THE NEW PLAY? WHERE DID YOU FIND THIS STORY?

I FOUND IT IN MY HEAD, JUDITH. IT IS A FAIRY TALE...

IT'S ABOUT A LOVELY YOUNG GIRL, JUST LIKE *YOU*, MY DEAR, WHO LIVES ON A DESERTED ISLAND WITH HER OLD FATHER, WHO IS A POWERFUL MAGICIAN, AND IS SECRETLY THE EXILED DUKE OF MILAN.

AND HOW A GALLANT PRINCE COMES AND TAKES HER AWAY FROM THE ISLAND.

I WILL LIKE IT SO VERY MUCH. IS IT A COMEDY?

...YES.

MOTHER SAYS THAT WE WOULD BE MUCH RICHER HAD YOU WRITTEN NOTHING BUT COMEDIES.

SHE SAYS NO ONE GOES TO THE THEATRE TO BE MADE GLUM.

AH.

MOTHER SAYS THAT MISTER JONSON TOLD HER THAT YOUR PLAYS WILL SOON BE FORGOT, BY THE COURT. THAT ALL THEY WANT NOW IS MASQUES...

THEN I SHALL PUT A MASQUE IN THIS.

OH.

WHY?

BECAUSE, AS YOU SAY, IT IS THE COURT FASHION TO INCLUDE MASQUES. AND I AM WRITING THIS PLAY FOR THE KING.

THE KING HIMSELF ASKED YOU FOR A PLAY? OH, FATHER. WHY DID YOU NOT TELL US?

THERE ARE OTHER KINGS THAN SCOTTISH JIMMY, JUDITH.

OH! YOU MUST NOT CALL HIM THAT.

THEY CALL HIM WORSE THAN THAT AT COURT.

THEY CALL HIM QUEEN JAMES.

WHAT NONSENSE ARE YOU TELLING THE GIRL NOW, WILL?

NOT NONSENSE, MY DEAR: NEITHER AIRY MOONSHINE NOR THE FLEETING LIGHT OF A WILL O' THE WISP. I WAS, INSTEAD, TELLING HER HOW OUR SOVEREIGN LORD IS KNOWN IN THE COURT.

IDIOT. TELL THE GIRL THAT, AND SHE'LL BE TELLING IT ALL OVER STRATFORD, AND THEN WHEN THEY ASK WHERE SUCH SEDITIOUS STUFF AND NONSENSE COMES FROM, IT'LL BE YOU THAT'S--

AYE, AND THEY'LL CUT OUT MY EYES AND THROW ME IN THE TOWER, AND THEY'LL MAKE A GREAT PIE OF MY HUMBLES AND MY LIGHTS AND--

ENOUGH! NOT ANOTHER WORD! NOT ONE! I SHALL NOT LISTEN. JUDITH, OFF TO YOUR ROOM!

YOU FILL HER SILLY HEAD WITH YOUR STUFF AND NONSENSE. SHE'S SIX-AND-TWENTY YEARS OF AGE, AND *STILL* NOT MARRIED. WILL YOU HAVE HER DIE AN OLD MAID?

WHY DO YOU NOT ADVISE HER TO DO WHAT MANY ANOTHER LADY OF HER ADVANCING YEARS HAS DONE TO SNARE A HUSBAND?

AND WHAT WOULD *THAT* BE?

WHY, TO SET A SNARE WITH HER GLANCE AND BAIT IT WITH HER QUOINT. THEN, WHEN HER BELLY SWELLS, HER POOR SILLY SWAIN WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO MAKE AN HONEST WOMAN OF HER.

WAS THAT NOT WHAT *YOU* DID, WHEN *YOU* WERE SIX-AND-TWENTY?

AYE.

AND WHERE D'Y'THINK YOU ARE GOING *NOW*, MAY I ASK?

I SHALL GET NO MORE WORK DONE HERE, TONIGHT;

THEREFORE I SHALL TAKE ME TO THE HOUSE OF THE BARLEY AND THE GRAPE.

THE *INN*. GOD-LOOK-YOU, HE'S TO THE INN. I MARRIED A *SOT!* GO TO THE INN, THEN, I CARE NOT.

YES, MY DEAR.

SILLY MAN! IT'S *RAINING* OUT THERE! YOU'LL CATCH YOUR *DEATH!*

# The Tempest

Written by Neil Gaiman - additional material by William Shakespeare
Illustrated by Charles Vess & Lettered by Todd Klein
Colored by Steve Oliff
Edited by Karen Berger & Associated by Shelly Roeberg
Special thanks to Bryan Talbot, John Ridgway and the Mysterious Mister Zed
Sandman characters created by Gaiman, Kieth & Dringenberg

AHAH. IT IS THE PLAGUE-CROW.

PLAGUE-CROW? AND FOR *WHY* IS IT A PLAGUE-CROW?

THE CAUSE OF *PLAGUE* IS *SIN*. THE CAUSE OF *SIN* IS *PLAYS*. THUS PLAYS CAUSE PLAGUES. *ERGO* THOSE WHO CAUSE PLAYS, WELL, THEY ARE THE VERIEST PLAGUE-CROWS...

PAY THEM NO MIND, MASTER WILL.

I SHALL PAY THEM NO MIND, MISTRESS QUINEY.

COME OVER *HERE*, BY THE FIRE, LET'S DRY YOU OFF A BIT, SOAKED TO THE *SKIN* YOU ARE! IT'S A BAD NIGHT TO BE OUT.

WHAT'LL YOU BE DRINKING? SOMETHING TO WARM YOU? WE'VE MULLED WINE, PIPING HOT...

THAT WOULD BE GOOD, YES.

THANK YOU, MISTRESS QUINEY.

*TOM!* SOME MULLED WINE OVER HERE, THAT'S A BOY!

I SAW YOUR JUDITH THIS MORNING, MASTER SHAKESPEARE.

I AM SURE THAT YOU DID.

WELL, *SHE* SAYS "HELLO, TOMMY," SO *I* SAYS "HELLO, MISS JUDITH,"

AND *SHE* SAYS, "'TIS A FINE MORNING," AND *I* SAYS, "THAT IT IS,"

AND *SHE* SAYS, "BUT IT MIGHT RAIN LATER," AND *I* SAYS, "THAT IT SURELY MIGHT."

AND IT DID.

I'M NOT *HAVING* YOU MAKING FUN OF MASTER WILL. WHEN MY DICKON, MAY HE REST EASY, WENT TO LONDON -- AND A POWERFUL BIG PLACE IT *WAS*, FILLED WITH SMOKE AND FOGS, HE SAID, SUCH THAT A MAN COULD NOT TAKE A STEP IN FRONT OF HIS FACE --

YES, YES, MISTRESS QUINEY.

AND HE SPENT HIS *LAST* PENNY TRYING TO MAKE 'EM LIFT THE TAX ON STRATFORD MERCHANTS, AND HE WAS SO DEEPLY IN DEBT THAT THEY WOULD SCARCELY LET HIM KEEP THE *BRITCHES* TO COVER HIS *BUM*, WHY THEN 'TWAS MASTER WILL PAID HIS DEBTS AND SENT HIM BACK TO STRATFORD--

YOU'VE *TOLD* US--

AND, AFTER THAT, DO YOU KNOW WHAT MY DICKON, GOD GIVE HIS SOUL PEACE, WOULD SAY TO ME? HE WOULD SAY, "MASTER WILL MAY BE BUT A CRAFTER OF GODLESS PLAYS, BUT HE'S *STILL* A BETTER MAN THAN MANY A SO-CALLED HONEST BAKER OR FARRIER."

AND SHALL I TELL YOU SOMETHING MORE? *HIS* JUDITH TOLD MY TOMMY THAT MASTER WILL WAS ASSISTING THE SCHOLARS WHOM THE KING HIMSELF CHARGED--

MISTRESS QUINEY. *ahem.*

OH, MASTER WILL.

WHERE IS THAT GOOD-FOR-NOTHING TOMMY BOY? HE SHALL BE THE DEATH OF ME, I SWEAR IT.

YOU ALREADY SAID--

HOLA! WINE! WINE FOR TWO DROWNED RATS AND THEIR POOR RAT QUEEN!

GOOD SIRS, I AM SURE THAT YOU ARE EVEN THIS VERY MOMENT THINKING: WHO ARE THESE NOBLE GENTLEMEN, AND WHAT HAVE THEY CONCEALED BENEATH THIS BLANKET?

WELL...

YOUR FIRST QUESTION IS EASILY ANSWERED: WE ARE SAILOR-MEN--I AM A BOSUN, MY FRIEND HERE IS A COOK. OUR DOXY IS INDEED, AS SHE APPEARS, A DOXY.

AND BENEATH THIS BLANKET?

FEH! IT SMELLS LIKE A FISH! LIKE A SALTED COD'S HEAD!

NO FISH, GOOD LADY, BUT A SAVAGE MAN.

A MAN?

WHY, GOOD SIRS, KIND MASTERS, 'TIS THE SAD CORPSE OF AN INDIAN, FROM THE DISTANT BERMUDAS: A NOBLE SAVAGE IN HIS OWN LAND, ONE OF THE CHILDREN OF ADAM: ADORNED WITH THE TRAPPINGS OF HIS KIND.

AND FOR BUT A SHILLING WE WILL REVEAL HIM TO YOU.

SIR?

DID I SAY A SHILLING? FOR MERELY A *SIXPENCE*, LET US SAY, A PENNY FROM EACH OF YOU.

HERE'S *MY* PENNY.

AND MINE.

*YOU*, SIR? 'TIS A NATURAL CURIOSITY. MOST EDUCATIONAL TOO. AND CHEAP AT TWICE THE PRICE.

NO.

DESPITE OUR PENNILESS FRIEND IN THE CORNER HERE, I AM DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE THAT WE HAVE A FULL EIGHT PENNIES IN THE HAT.

THEN *HERE*, GENTLES, IS OUR FINE SAVAGE.

YOUR FINE *CODFISH*, MORE LIKE.

*EEK!*

*OH! OH!* 'TIS A *RAWHEAD* OR A *BLOODYBONES!* A *MONSTROUS THING!* I NEVER *SAW* SUCH A THING! NOT IN *ALL* MY BORN DAYS!

AND SUCH A TERRIBLE *SMELL!*

HE WAS WOKEN IN THE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING BY VOICES RAISED IN RAUCOUS SONG.

...WOULD CRY TO A SAILOR, "GO HANG"

SO TO SEA BOYS AND LET HER GO HANG--

GOOO HAAAANGGGG

SHE LOVED NOT THE SAVOR OF TAR NOR OF PITCH--

BUT A TAILOR MIGHT SCRATCH HER WHERE'ER SHE DID ITCH...

SO TO SEA BOYS AND LET HER GO HANG!

THEIR WOMAN WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.

HE WATCHED THEM UNTIL THEY WERE OUT OF SIGHT, THEN HE WENT BACK TO SLEEP.

Miranda: 'Tis far off
And rather like a dream than an assurance
That my remembrance warrants. Had I not
Four or five women once that tended me?

Prospero:
Thou hadst, and more, Miranda,
But how is it
That this lives in thy mind?
What seest thou else
In the dark backward and
abysm of time?

C. Vess '96

DARK BACKWARD AND ABYSM OF TIME...?

HMM. IT'LL SERVE.

IF THOU REMEMBEREST AUGHT ERE THOU CAM'ST HERE, HOW THOU CAM'ST HERE THOU MAYST...

WILL? YOUR GOOD-FOR-NOTHING FRIEND IS UP FROM LONDON. I *TOLD* HIM YOU WERE NOT TO BE DISTURBED--

MY FRIEND?

MY COMMENTS ON PERICLES NOTWITHSTANDING, WILLIAM, I TAKE PRIDE IN REGARDING MYSELF AS YOUR FRIEND.

HONEST BEN JONSON!

SO. WHAT DO YOU WRITE?

MY FINAL PLAY.

AH.

YOU WRITE WITH SUCH FACILITY, WILL.

FOR ME, I ANGUISH OVER EVERY WORD. I AM CONVINCED THAT YOUR WORK WOULD BE IMPROVED IF YOU TOOK MORE TIME OVER IT.

PERHAPS, BEN.

IS THERE WINE, GOOD MISTRESS ANNE? I HAVE TRAVELLED FOR MANY LEAGUES, AND I SWEAR MY THROAT IS PARCHED WITH THE DUST OF TRAVEL.

AND A LITTLE FOOD WOULD NOT GO AMISS. BUT I WOULD NOT WISH TO TROUBLE YOU.

I'LL SEE WHAT'S IN THE PANTRY.

YOUR LAST, YOU SAY? WELL, PERHAPS IT IS FOR THE BEST THAT YOU RETIRE YOUR QUILL.

YES. YOU TOLD ME WHAT YOU THOUGHT.

YOU KNOW WHAT I THOUGHT OF YOUR MOST RECENT OFFERINGS.

AND PERHAPS THE WELL OF YOUR TALENT HAS FINALLY RUN DRY, WILL. WOULD WE ALL WERE WISE ENOUGH TO CALL A HALT, WHEN WE WERE DONE. I TRUST I SHALL ...

YOU MUST APPRECIATE MY HONESTY, THOUGH. WHEN YOU WRITE WELL, GOOD WILL, AM I NOT ALWAYS THE FIRST TO PRAISE YOU?

OF COURSE.

MOTHER SAYS TO TELL YOU THAT THERE'S SMALL BEER AND COLD CHICKEN LAID OUT IN THE PARLOR.

SMALL BEER? WHERE'S THE MADEIRA? THE CANARY? THE SACK?

AT THE INN.

SO. WHERE DOES *THIS* ONE COME FROM? HAVE YOU BEEN RAIDING POOR HOLINSHED AGAIN? OR DOES PLUTARCH BEAR THE BRUNT OF YOUR DEPREDATIONS?

BITS OF THINGS, HERE AND THERE. BUT IT'S MOSTLY MINE, FOR ONCE.

D'YOU KNOW--?*muurp*?--WHY YOU'RE ALWAYS TAKING YOUR PLOTS FROM OTHER PEOPLE, WILL?

NOT REALLY, BEN. BUT I HAVE NO DOUBT YOU WILL ENLIGHTEN ME.

I SHALL: LOOK AT ME.

IN MY TIME I'VE BEEN A SOLDIER, A SCHOLAR, A PAUPER, A DUELIST, AN ACTOR, A TRANSLATOR *AND* A SPY. I'VE KILLED A MAN IN A DUEL. I'VE THRICE BEEN IMPRISONED.

RISKING MY *LIFE* FOR MY RELIGION, I PROUDLY TAKE COMMUNION FROM THE CHURCH OF ROME, GOD LOOK YOU. I'VE LIVED LIFE TO THE FULL.

WHAT'VE *YOU* DONE, WILL? A LITTLE TANNING, HELD HORSES, A LITTLE ACTING, A LITTLE WRITING.

I'VE LIVED AS MUCH *LIFE* AS YOU, BEN.

BUT *I* HAVE MET *ALL* SORTS OF PEOPLE... FROM THE LOWEST TO THE MOST HIGH. THUS, I UNDERSTAND 'EM.

I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT ALL ONE NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND PEOPLE IS TO BE A *PERSON*.

AND I *HAVE* THAT HONOR.

I SUPPOSE YOU *DO*. LOR', THIS PUTS ME IN MIND OF THE OLD DAYS, SPARRING OVER SACK AT THE MERMAID.

*YOU* WERE SPARRING, BEN. I WAS ONLY EVER TALKING.

SO...TELL ME ABOUT YOUR NEW PLAY. DOES IT GO *WELL?*

NOT REALLY, NO.

I AM WRITING A SCENE IN WHICH MIRANDA, OUR VIRGINAL AND INNOCENT HEROINE, SITS AND LISTENS AS HER FATHER PROSPERO, THE EXILED AND DEPOSED DUKE OF MILAN, AND A WISE MAGICIAN, *LABORIOUSLY* EXPLAINS THE PLOT TO HER.

I TRUST THEY WILL FINISH SOON, AND ALLOW ME TO GET ON TO MORE INTERESTING MATTERS. THERE IS A *SPIRIT* I NEED TO BRING ON...

THE ENCHANTER'S SPRITE? A FAMILIAR?

YES.

HMM...

PERCHANCE THE ENCHANTER COULD SEND THE GIRL TO *SLEEP* WHILE HE TALKS TO THE FAMILIAR.

AYE, BEN...

PERHAPS...

I SAW THEM BUILDING A GREAT NUMBER OF BONE-FIRES, YESTERDAY, AS I CAME UP FROM LONDON.

THEY MEMORIALIZE THAT *UNFORTUNATE* AFFAIR--

D'YOU MEAN, THAT MOST *EVIL* AND TERRIBLE PAPIST PLOT TO EXPLODE AND BURN OUR PARLIAMENT AND KING?

A FEW POOR SILLY CATHOLICS--

AND WHAT EXACTLY WAS *YOUR* PART IN ALL THAT, HONEST BEN? I NEVER QUITE UNDERSTOOD.

I, UH, *HRRUMPH*, ASSISTED HIS MAJESTY AND HIS MAJESTY'S OFFICERS --SHOWED THEM THAT NOT *ALL* CATHOLICS WERE UNTRUSTWORTHY...

AND WHAT MIGHT *THAT* BE, YOUNG MAN?

IT'S GUY FAWKES, MASTER. HIM AS TRIED TO BLOW UP PARLIAMENT. WE'LL ***BURN*** HIM TONIGHT, ON THE FIRES.

IT'S ***FOOLISHNESS***. THEY'LL FORGET ALL THIS SOON ENOUGH.

IT'S THE ***LAW***, BEN. NOVEMBER THE FIFTH MUST ALWAYS BE CELEBRATED.

THEY'LL FORGET.

YOU THINK SO? THEN LET US GIVE THEM SOMETHING THEY WILL NOT FORGET.

IT'LL ***SERVE***. THERE: ***NOW***, WE'LL TEACH IT TO THAT URCHIN, AND HE'LL TEACH IT TO HIS FRIENDS, AND IT'LL LAST A ***HUNDRED YEARS***...

I DOUBT IT.

"REMEMBER, REMEMBER, THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER, GUNPOWDER, TREASON AND PLOT..." THERE:

BEN, CAN YOU ***COMPLETE*** THE DOGGEREL?

UM. LET ME SEE. ***HMM***. NO, I HAVE IT. "I SEE NO REASON WHY GUNPOWDER TREASON SHOULD EVER BE FORGOT." THERE.

HOW CAN YOU ABANDON THE SMOKE FOR ALL THIS, ALL THIS NOTHING?

DON'T YOU MISS ***LONDON***? THE BUSTLE? THE PEOPLE? THE BLACKFRIARS AND THE GLOBE? THE ***LIFE***?

THERE IS LIFE APLENTY ***HERE***, BEN.

AND HOW GO THINGS WITH YOU IN STRATFORD? ARE YOU NOT... WELL, LET ME PUT IT BLUNTLY... HOW GO THINGS WITH MISTRESS ANNE?

WE REMAIN ***CIVIL***. AND I SLEEP ON MY BED, IN MY ROOM, AND SHE SLEEPS IN HER BED, IN HERS.

AH.

I WAS REREADING YOUR SONNETS. THE ONES THORPE PUBLISHED.

I *TRUST* YOU ENJOYED THEM.

YOU SHOULD ***WINNOW*** THEM, WILL. IN MY ESTIMATION, PERHAPS A DOZEN OR SO ARE WORTHY OF POSTERITY.

THE REST ARE ***PRATTLE,*** NOT ART. THEY WILL DO ***NOTHING*** FOR YOUR REPUTATION.

STILL, THEY ACHIEVED THEIR PURPOSE, EH? THEY GOT YOU INTO BED.

***THAT'S*** WHAT A ***SONNET*** IS ***FOR,*** EH? SPREADING A PAIR OF FAIR LEGS.

I AM TOO ***OLD*** FOR ALL THAT NONSENSE.

DO YOU ***THINK*** OF HER EVER? DARK-HEARTED ***SHREW*** THAT SHE PROVED HERSELF...

I RECALL NO SHREWS, BEN.

AH, WILL. YOU ARE ***TOO*** GOOD-NATURED A FELLOW. I HAVE NEVER HEARD YOU SAY A BAD WORD ABOUT A LIVING SOUL.

WHAT ***NOW?***

***THIS*** WILL BE MY ***LAST*** PLAY, BEN.

SO YOU ***SAID.***

IN SPITE OF ANYTHING I MIGHT HAVE SAID ABOUT *PERICLES* ...WELL... YOU ARE A ***BORN*** PLAYWRIGHT, WILL. IT'S IN YOUR BLOOD, AND IN YOUR BONES. I AM ***SURE*** IT WILL TAKE THE COLD OF DEATH TO TUG THE PEN FROM YOUR HAND.

I ***HOPE*** NOT. I SHALL BE PLEASED TO PUT DOWN MY PEN.

TRULY?

TRULY.

And, for thou wast a spirit too delicate
To act her earthly and abhorr'd commands,
Refusing her grand hests, she did confine thee,

FATHER?

YES, JUDITH.

HOW GOES YOUR PLAY?

IT GOES. TOO **SLOW**. TOO **SLOW**. BUT--IT GOES.

WILL IT MAKE ME *LAUGH*, FATHER?

PER*HAPS*. I HAVE IN MIND A SCENE, LATER, WHERE TWO DRUNKEN SAILORS AND THE SAVAGE STEAL THE WIZARD'S BOOKS, AND TRY TO COMMAND THE ISLE'S MAGICKS; BUT EVERY SPELL THEY TRY MISCARRIES UPON THEM.

IT WILL BE A GOOD SCENE FOR SOME CLOWNS, AND MANY SPIRITS, AND SUCH.

I *WISH* I COULD READ. I *WISH* I WERE NOT SO DULL.

YOU ARE NOT *DULL*. YOU'RE MY BABY. MY LITTLE GIRL.

By help of her more potent ministers,
And in her most unmitigable rage,
Into a cloven pine;

within which rift
Imprisond, thou didst painfully remain
A dozen years; within which space she died,
and left thee there;

FATHER?

WHEN I WAS A GIRL AND I SAW A STAR FALLING --

--OR WHEN HAMNET AND I WOULD SPLIT THE CHICKEN-BONE MEN CALL THE MERRYTHOUGHT--MY WISH WAS ALWAYS THAT I HAD A FATHER WHO WAS A SMITH, OR A FLETCHER, OR EVEN A MILLER.

WHY WAS THAT ?

BECAUSE YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN ***HERE*** WITH US, IN STRATFORD.

I AM HERE WITH YOU ***NOW.***

***WHY*** DID YOU HAVE TO GO TO LONDON? ***WHY*** MAKE UP THE PLAYS? ***WHY*** ACT? I WARRANT YOU COULD HAVE FOUND GOOD, ***HONEST*** WORK IN STRATFORD.

PERHAPS.

I WOULD HAVE GIVEN THE ***WORLD*** TO HAVE HAD YOU HERE-- WHEN I TRULY ***WAS*** A LITTLE GIRL.

I WAS ***SO*** ENVIOUS OF HAMNET, WHEN HE WENT WITH YOU THAT SUMMER.

HE WROTE LETTERS HOME, AND MOTHER, OR SUSANNE, WOULD READ TO ME WHAT HE SAID, AND I WOULD WEEP, FOR I COULD NOT BE THERE WITH YOU.

AND MOTHER ***ALSO*** WOULD WEEP. ***MOTHER*** WEPT MOST OF ALL.

DID YOU NOT ***THINK?*** DID YOU NOT ***CARE?***

I,,,FOLLOWED A DREAM.

I DID AS I SAW BEST, AT THE TIME.

NOT MUCH LONGER, JUDITH.

NOT ***TOO*** LONG, NOW.

Prospero. Awake, dear heart, awake! Thou hast slept well. Awake!

Miranda. The strangeness of your story put Heaviness in me.

Pros. Shake it off. Come on; We'll visit Caliban my slave, who never Yields us kind answer.

Miranda. 'Tis a villain, sir, I do not love to look on.

WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'LL BE GETTING YOUR *WISH* SOON ENOUGH, WILLIAM.

YOUNG TOMMY QUINEY PAYS HIS COURT TO OUR JUDY-LASS.

YES.

I *WISH*... I *WISH* SHE WOULD FIND HER A MORE SUITABLE SUITOR.

HE IS PLEASANT ENOUGH.

HE HAS TOO MUCH OF HIS *FATHER* IN HIM. THE OLD DEVIL CAME TO LONDON AND SPENT EVERY *PENNY* HE HAD ON WHORES. I HAD TO LEND HIM THIRTY POUNDS TO GET HIM OUT OF TROUBLE.

"YOU ARE **NEVER** SATISFIED, MY WILL. YOU DO NOT WANT WHAT YOU WANTED AS SOON AS YOU **HAVE** IT, BUT MUST **ALWAYS** BE PINING AND PLAINING AFTER SOMETHING MORE."

WHAT WIN I,
IF I GAIN THE THING I SEEK?
A DREAM, A BREATH, A FROTH
OF FLEETING JOY.
WHO BUYS A MINUTE'S MIRTH
TO WAIL A WEEK?
OR SELLS ETERNITY TO GET
A TOY?

**MORE** OF YOUR PRETTY-PLAY-NONSENSE? WELL, I CAN GIVE YOU THE ANSWER TO **THAT** ONE.

"WHO BUYS A MINUTE'S MIRTH TO WAIL A WEEK?" THAT'S **PEOPLE** DO THAT. LIKE OLD QUINEY SPENDING HIS PENNIES ON THE WHORES OF LONDON TOWN.

YOU KNOW THE TROUBLE WITH **YOU**, WILL? YOU LIVE IN **WORDS**, NOT IN THE REAL WORLD. YOU **THINK** TOO MUCH. YOU **DREAM** TOO MUCH.

WHEREAS **I** CONSIDER MYSELF A PRACTICAL MAN.

OF **COURSE** YOU DO, MY DEAR.

PRACTICAL MEN **ALWAYS** DESERT THEIR WIVES AND RUN AWAY TO MAKE UP PRETTY TALES; AND WRITE PRETTY SONNETS TO PRETTY GIRLS AND PRETTY BOYS.

Caliban.
You taught me language: and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse.
The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

DECEMBER, 1610.

A good evening to you, Master Shakespeare.

I KNOW YOU, SIR, DO I NOT?

You do.

BUT YOU HAVE *CHANGED* SINCE I LAST SAW YOU.

Not I, but you, good Will.

I CANNOT SLEEP.

No?

*NO.* I AM LOOKING AT OLD PLAYS OF MINE...

I AM MEANT TO BE AMENDING THEM, FOR A PRINTER; BUT I DO NOT.

I CANNOT EVEN *READ* THEM WITH PLEASURE. I BEGIN, BUT I SEE NO *ART*. JUST *ARTIFICE*.

*THIS* SPEECH MEANS *NOTHING*, I WROTE IT BUT TO COVER WHILE BURBAGE SANK A BEER OFFSTAGE AND CHANGED HIS GOWN.

*THIS* LADY'S SPEECH IS *PRETTY* BUT *POINTLESS*-- YOUNG CORDELL THAT WEEK SULKED UNTIL I GAVE HIM SOMETHING TO MAKE THE PIT CHEER.

How goes the NEW play, Will Shakespeare?

YOUR PLAY? IT GOES...

I HAVE WRITTEN WORSE. I HAVE WRITTEN FASTER.

BUT I AM NO LONGER YOUNG, AND I AM TIRED.

Hmm.

WHY DO YOU WANT THE PLAY? WHY DO YOU NEED ME TO WRITE IT? WHY AM I DOING THIS?

Why? Because we made a bargain, Will Shakespeare. Two plays.

YES. THE FIRST PLAY I WROTE AS A GIFT FOR... YOUR FRIENDS...

BUT THIS IS... YOUR PLAY. FOR YOU.

Yes.

WHY THIS PLAY?

WILL? YOU'RE SLEEPING.

THUH? GRMMBZZ. BRUH.

"GO TO THY BED, SILLY MAN."

"GO TO THY BED."

What have we here? a man or a fish? dead or alive?

A fish! He smells like a fish; a very ancient and fish-like smell; a kind of not-of-the-newest poor-John. A strange fish!

Were I in England now, as once I was, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make any man;

any strange beast there makes a man; when they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead indian.

DEAD OR ALIVE

THERE WOULD THIS MONSTER MAKE ANY MAN

TEN TO SEE A DEAD INDIAN



C.DESS'96

...AND MASTER LIVELY PARTICULARLY WISHED ME TO CONVEY TO YOU HIS DELIGHT WITH THE WORK YOU DID ON THE PSALMS WE SENT TO YOU.

THERE WERE SOME WHO FELT THAT WE MIGHT HAVE MADE A MISTAKE; AND THEY HAVE NOW EATEN THEIR WORDS.

I WOULD THAT I WERE A POET. I WOULD THAT I HAD YOUR GOD-GIVEN GIFT OF WORDS.

AND I WOULD THAT I HAD SOME HEBREW, AND MORE GREEK.

AH, BUT THAT IS A MATTER OF APPLICATION, NOT INSPIRATION.

INSPIRATION? DOES A CARPENTER RELY ON INSPIRATION?

HE RELIES ON HIS TOOLS.

AND WORDS ARE MY TOOLS.

I ...YES... I TAKE YOUR POINT. INDEED, YOU USE YOUR TOOLS WELL. BUT THE CRAFT, THE TALENT, THIS COMES FROM GOD, FROM WHOM ALL TALENTS COME.

AND IF IT DOES NOT?

I WOULD NOT HAVE TAKEN YOU FOR AN ATHEIST, MASTER WILL.

WHAT IF HE BARGAINED WITH THE POW'RS OF THE DARK FOR TALENT, FOR POWER, FOR CRAFT?

THEN HE WOULD BE DAMNED. WHY ASK YOU THIS?

NO, NO, YOU MISTAKE MY MEANING. WHAT IF A MAN DID NOT TAKE HIS TALENT FROM GOD? WHAT IF HE KNEW NOT FROM WHERE IT CAME--WHAT IF IT CAME FROM SOME DEVIL, SOME SETEBOS?

I... I HAVE A MAGICIAN, IN THE PLAY I WRITE, WITH MAGICAL BOOKS AND ROBE AND STAFF, AND SPIRITS WHO DO HIS WILL.

BUT HE IS A GOOD MAN, AND I WOULD NOT SEE HIM DAMNED LIKE KIT'S POOR ***FAUSTUS***...

***AH!*** THEN, AT THE PLAY'S END, LET HIM ***BREAK*** HIS STAFF AND ***BURN*** HIS BOOKS, AND ***RENOUNCE*** ALL MAGICS.

AND HE WILL NO LONGER BE DAMNED?

PRAYER IS A ***MOST*** EFFICACIOUS THING. WHAT DID YOU SAY IN THAT PSALM, EH?

"GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND OUR STRENGTH, A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE. THEREFORE WILL NOT WE FEAR, THOUGH THE EARTH BE REMOVED, AND THOUGH THE MOUNTAINS BE CARRIED INTO THE MIDST OF THE SEA."

***FINE*** PHRASING, SIR. ***FINE*** PHRASING.

YOU ***KNOW***, GOOD WILL, WHEN ***FIRST*** YOU ASKED ME OF YOUR MAGICIAN, I THOUGHT, FOOLISHLY, YOU SPOKE OF YOURSELF.

I AM NO MAGICIAN, MY FRIEND. WE HAD BETTER MAKE HASTE BACK TO THE HOUSE.

WHEN THE ***SNOW*** IS SETTLED I MUST BE ON MY WAY, WILL.

JANUARY, 1611.

HAH!

LISTEN TO *THIS*, MY DEAR.

NOW IN THE *PLAY* FERDINAND--THE YOUNG PRINCE--AND MIRANDA--THE BEAUTEOUS MAIDEN--ARE GIVEN TO EACH OTHER, AFTER SOME WOOD-CHOPPING ON FERDINAND'S PART, BY PROSPERO, THE MAGICIAN. AND HE SUMMONS HIS SPIRITS TO PERFORM A MASQUE FOR THEM.

AT THE END OF THE MASQUE HE JUMPS UP, SCATTERS THE MASQUERS, RECOLLECTS THE PLOTS AGAINST HIM, THEN SAYS TO FERDINAND--

'HEM,

*OUR REVELS NOW ARE ENDED. THESE OUR ACTORS, AS I FORETOLD YOU, WERE ALL SPIRITS, AND ARE MELTED INTO AIR, INTO THIN AIR;*

AND, LIKE THE BASELESS FABRIC OF THIS VISION, THE CLOUD-CAPP'D TOWERS, THE GORGEOUS PALACES, THE SOLEMN TEMPLES, THE GREAT GLOBE ITSELF,

YEA, ALL WHICH IT INHERIT, SHALL DISSOLVE AND, LIKE THIS INSUBSTANTIAL PAGEANT FADED, LEAVE NOT A RACK BEHIND.

WE ARE SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE ON, AND OUR LITTLE LIFE IS ROUNDED WITH A SLEEP.

THERE, IS THAT NOT FINE?

I AM *PLEASED* YOU MENTIONED ***WOOD-CHOPPING***, WILL, FOR WOOD-CHOPPING ***CERTAIN-LY*** NEEDS A-DOING, ELSE WE SHALL ***FREEZE*** IN OUR BEDS THIS NIGHT.

AND MY SPEECH...?

FOR ***HOW*** YOU EXPECT ME TO COOK FOR YOU WITHOUT FIREWOOD I WOULD NOT KNOW. AND YOU WOULD BE THE ***FIRST*** TO COMPLAIN, WERE THERE NO ROASTED GOOSE, NOR NO HOT PUDDING.

YES, MY DEAR.

Alonso. I long
To hear the story of your life,
which must
Take the ear strangely.

Prospero. I'll deliver all;
And promise you calm seas,
auspicious gales,
And sail so expeditious,
that shall catch
Your royal fleet far off.
—My Ariel, chick,
That is thy charge.
Then to the elements
Be free, and fare thou well!—

C. Vess-98

Please you, draw near.

Exeunt Omnes.

Is it finished?

IT IS.

Then we are quits, Will Shakespeare. It remains only for me to thank you, and wish you well in your life to come.

SIR, I *THINK* I HAVE EARNED A LITTLE MORE THAN *THAT*.

FOR A GOODLY PART OF MY LIFE I HAVE BEEN IN YOUR ***SERVICE. NO*** MASTER WOULD FREE A PRENTICE WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A GLASS OF WINE IN THE MASTER'S PARLOR.

Sir, is this your will?

SIR, IT *IS*.

I see. Then we shall take a glass of wine in my house.

YOUR HOUSE. YES. IS IT... IS IT *FAR*?

Aye. Very far. So tell me, Will: do you see yourself reflected in your tale?

I WOULD BE A *FOOL* IF I DENIED IT. I AM PROSPER, CERTAINLY; AND I TRUST I *SHALL*.

BUT I AM ALSO *ARIEL*--A FLAMING FIRING SPIRIT, CRACKLING LIKE LIGHTNING IN THE SKY.

AND I AM DULL CALIBAN. I AM DARK ANTONIO, BROODING AND PLANNING, AND OLD GONZALO, COUNSELING SILLY WISDOM.

AND I AM TRINCULO, THE JESTER, AND STEPHANO THE BUTLER, FOR THEY ARE CLOWNS AND FOOLS, AND I AM ALSO A CLOWN AND A FOOL. AND ON OCCASION, DRUNKARDS.

FOR MERCY'S SAKE, WHERE ARE WE?

We walk to my house, Will. There is nothing to fear.

We were talking of reflections, of the play mirroring life.

NOTHING TO FEAR? I THOUGHT I HEARD THE BEATING OF MIGHTY WINGS, AS IN A NIGHTMARE THAT RODE ME WHEN I WAS A BOY...

You do. But have no fear of them. Let us talk of tales and plays.

TALES. YES.

WELL, MY OWN FINE WORDS NOTWITHSTANDING, LIFE IS NO PLAY. WE MEET PEOPLE ONCE, AND NEVER SEE THEM AGAIN. THERE IS NO SHAPE TO EVENTS, NO POINT AT WHICH WE TURN TO THE AUDIENCE FOR THEIR PRAISE.

NO TIME AT WHICH WE STEP BEHIND THE STAGE, TO SEE THE ACTORS CHANGING THEIR WIGS, AND PAINTING THEIR FACES, AND MUTTERING THEIR LINES.

But that is precisely where you are now, Will.

Welcome to my house.

So, we shall go to my parlor, and drink wine, as you have requested.

SIR? DO I DREAM ?

Indeed. What wine would you like to drink?

WHEN I WAS *YOUNG*, MY FIRST MONTH IN LONDON, A GYPSY-GIRL GAVE ME WINE TO DRINK. IT WAS TAWNY-COLORED, AND SWEET AS HONEY, AND AFTER I HAD TAKEN A SIP, SHE KISSED ME, AND NO *KISS* HAS EVER TASTED FINER.

NO.. NO *WINE* NEITHER.

YES. IT IS AS I REMEMBER. IT SUMMONS MANY MEMORIES... NOT ALL OF THEM GOOD.

BUT STILL, FOR *THIS*, AS FOR YOUR *OTHER* BOON, I THANK YOU.

WHY DID YOU *GIVE* THEM TO ME?

Give you what, Will?

THE *PLAYS*. THE *WORDS*. I DID NOT ASK FOR THEM...

I WOULD GIVE *ANYTHING* TO HAVE YOUR GIFTS, OR MORE THAN ANYTHING TO GIVE MEN DREAMS THAT WOULD LIVE ON LONG AFTER I WAS DEAD.

I'D BARGAIN, LIKE YOUR FAUSTUS, FOR THAT BOON....

I *SAID* THAT?

Yes.

AND WHAT *DID* YOU GIVE ME?

What you requested:

the power to give men dreams that would live on, after you were gone. And you gave me two plays.

WHY *ME*?

Because you had a gift, and the talent. Because you were no worse a man than many another. Because you had a good heart.

And because you wanted it ...so much...

YES, I *DID*... I REMEMBER. I WAS SO *YOUNG*. FIVE AND TWENTY...

LOOK AT ME *NOW*: A FAT OLD MAN, LUSTLESS AND LACKLUSTER, WITH MY TWO-SCORE YEARS AND SEVEN...

I DREAM OF BEING NOBODY AT ALL. MY EVERY THIRD THOUGHT IS OF THE GRAVE.

BUT *YOU* MUST HAVE LIVED LONGER THAN TWO SCORE YEARS AND SEVEN.

If I must.

*WHAT* WOULD HAVE HAPPENED, HAD WE NOT MET, IN THE INN, TWENTY YEARS AGO?

It is not given to any man to know what would have happened.

BUT *YOU* KNOW.

I can hazard an educated guess.

What would have happened? You would have written a handful of other plays, in quality no better than, say, "*The Merrye Devil of Edmonton*", and then you would have come home to Stratford.

You would have taught school, saved a little money. You would have bought a house, let it out, and bought another.

You would have made your money in bricks and mortar -- enough for your family's coat of arms, enough to make them forget your father's setbacks.

You would not have been satisfied with your life; and, from time to time, you would have bored your children with the tales of your years in London, your days on the stage.

AND *HAMNET*. MY BOY. WOULD HE HAVE LIVED?

*NO*. DO NOT TELL ME THAT. YOU HAVE SAID TOO MUCH ALREADY.

I WONDER...

I WONDER IF IT WAS *WORTH* IT.

WHATEVER *HAPPENED* TO ME IN MY LIFE, HAPPENED TO ME *AS* A WRITER OF PLAYS.

I'D FALL IN LOVE, OR FALL IN LUST. AND AT THE HEIGHT OF MY PASSION, I WOULD THINK, "SO *THIS* IS HOW IT FEELS," AND I WOULD TIE IT UP IN PRETTY WORDS.

I *WATCHED* MY LIFE AS IF IT WERE HAPPENING TO SOMEONE ELSE.

MY SON DIED. AND I WAS HURT; BUT I *WATCHED* MY HURT, AND EVEN *RELISHED* IT, A LITTLE, FOR NOW I COULD WRITE A *REAL* DEATH, A *TRUE* LOSS.

MY HEART WAS BROKEN BY MY DARK LADY, AND I WEPT, IN MY ROOM, ALONE; BUT WHILE I WEPT, SOMEWHERE INSIDE I SMILED.

FOR I KNEW I COULD TAKE MY BROKEN HEART AND PLACE IT ON THE STAGE OF *THE GLOBE*, AND MAKE THE PIT CRY TEARS OF THEIR OWN.

AND NOW... I AM NO LONGER YOUNG. MY HEALTH IS NOT GOOD, AND MY DAUGHTER CONSORTS WITH A LECHEROUS APE, WHICH HER FANCY AMENDS TO A GALLANT PRINCE.

MY WIFE SLEEPS IN HER FATHER'S BED, FAR FROM ME: AND SHE TREATS ME LIKE A FOOLISH CHILD.

AND PROSPERO AND MIRANDA, CALIBAN AND GONZALO, AETHEREAL ARIEL AND SILENT ANTONIO, ALL OF *THEM* ARE MORE REAL TO ME THAN SILLY, WISE BEN JONSON; SUSANNA AND JUDITH; THE GOOD CITIZENS OF STRATFORD; THE WHORES AND OYSTER-WOMEN OF LONDON TOWN...

You are well-loved.

BECAUSE I MEAN NO ONE HARM; AND BECAUSE I KEEP MY OPINIONS TO MYSELF. IT MATTERS NAUGHT.

KIT *MARLOWE* WAS NOT WELL-LOVED: HE WAS *NOT* A GOOD MAN; BUT HIS FAUSTUS WILL *NEVER* BE FORGOT --AND *HE* MADE NO BARGAIN WITH YOU.

You think not?

AS A GOOD CHRISTIAN, I MAY NOT HOLD WITH PAGAN THINGS. AND IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU ARE A PAGAN THING.

I am of your faith. I am of all faiths, in my fashion.

YOU PLAY WITH WORDS. AM I BOUND TO *HELL*, FOR TRAFFICKING SO WITH YOU?

Only if it would give you pleasure to go there. It is a cheerless place.

THEY GAVE ME SOME OF THE PSALMS TO PRETTIFY.

MY DAUGHTER IS PROUD OF ME; MY WIFE AVERS THAT MAKING THE BIBLE INTO ENGLISH IS THE WORK OF THE DEVIL, AND THAT WHEN THE NEXT KING COMES BY, HE'LL HAVE MY HEAD FOR IT.

AH, VANITY, VANITY. I HID MY NAME IN A PSALM.

IF HE *KNEW* THAT THERE WAS WITCHCRAFT BEHIND MY PLAYS, THE KING *WOULD* HAVE MY LIFE.

There is no witchcraft, Will, no magic. I opened a door within you, that was all.

SO WHY *THIS* PLAY?

IT IS A TOPICAL PIECE -- I TOOK THE INSPIRATION FOR IT FROM THE WRECK OF THE SEA-VENTURE IN THE BERMUDAS LAST YEAR.

THE STORY IS MERELY THE SORT OF FAIRY STORY *ALL* PARENTS TELL TO AMUSE THEIR CHILDREN.

THERE IS SOME OF *ME* IN IT. SOME OF JUDITH. THINGS I SAW, THINGS I THOUGHT. I STOLE A SPEECH FROM ONE OF MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS. AND CLOSED WITH AN UNEQUIVOCALLY CHEAP AND HAPPY ENDING.

WHY DID YOU NOT WANT A *TRAGEDY*? SOMETHING LOFTY, SOMETHING DARK, A TALE OF A NOBLE HERO WITH A TRAGIC FLAW?

THE TEMPEST

I wanted a tale of graceful ends. I wanted a play about a King who drowns his books, and breaks his staff, and leaves his kingdom.

About a magician who becomes a man. About a man who turns his back on magic.

THE TEMPEST

"But this rough magic
I here abjure...

"I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms
in the earth,
And deeper than did ever
plummet sound
I'll drown my book..."

BUT--
WHY?

That is not
your concern,
Will.

NOT MY CONCERN? I GAVE YOU TWENTY YEARS. I WROTE YOUR PLAYS. AND IF YOU "OPENED THE DOOR" THEN I STILL DID THE WORK.

I PUT EACH WORD DOWN, I MADE THE ACTORS TALK. I GAVE YOUR STORIES THE FORMS IN WHICH THEY WILL BE REMEMBERED.

I HAVE EARNED AN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION. WHY?

Because I
will never leave
my island.

YOU LIVE ON AN ISLAND?

I am...
in my fashion...
an island...

BUT THAT CAN CHANGE. ALL MEN CAN CHANGE.

BUT...

I am not
a man.

And I do
not change.

I asked
you earlier
if you saw
yourself
reflected in
your tale.

YES.

I do not. I
MAY not. I
am Prince
of stories,
Will; but I
have no
story of my
own. Nor
shall I
ever.

But I thank you.

IT IS OVER.

WHY, I SWEAR, WILL, BY OUR LADY'S TEARS, YOU CANNOT HAVE BEEN TO YOUR BED THIS NIGHT.

WHAT IS OVER, SILLY MAN?

ALL OF IT. THE BURDEN OF WORDS.

I CAN LAY IT DOWN, NOW. LET IT REST.

YOU MAKE NO SENSE, WILL, WITH ALL YOUR PRATTLING.

FORGIVE ME, MY LOVE.

YOU LEFT ME THE EPILOGUE TO WRITE, MY PALE FRIEND. AND TO WRITE IT WITH NO MAGIC BUT MINE OWN WORDS.

VERY WELL.

NOW MY CHARMS ARE, ALL O'ERTHROWN, AND WHAT STRENGTH I HAVE'S MINE OWN, WHICH IS MOST FAINT.

Now my charms
Now 'tis true
confined by you
sent to Naples.

NOW 'TIS TRUE I MUST BE HERE CONFINED BY YOU OR SENT TO NAPLES.

Let me not
Since I have my dukedom got
And pardoned the deceiver, dwell
In this bare island by your spell;

But release me from my bands
With the help of your good
hands:

Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please.

NOW I WANT
SPIRITS TO ENFORCE,
ART TO ENCHANT;

AND MY
ENDING IS DESPAIR
UNLESS I BE RELIEV'D
BY PRAYER,

Which pierces so,
that it assaults
Mercy itself,
and frees all faults.

AS YOU FROM CRIMES
WOULD PARDONED BE,
LET YOUR INDULGENCE
SET ME FREE.

JUDITH SHAKESPEARE MARRIED TOM QUINEY IN FEBRUARY 1616. IT WAS NOT A HAPPY MARRIAGE.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE DIED ON APRIL 23RD, 1616, ON HIS BIRTHDAY, FROM AN ILLNESS SAID TO HAVE BEEN CONTRACTED FOLLOWING AN EVENING'S DRINKING WITH BEN JONSON. HE WAS FIFTY-TWO YEARS OLD.

HE WROTE NOTHING MORE ALONE, AFTER *THE TEMPEST*.

ANNE SHAKESPEARE DIED IN 1623, AT THE AGE OF SIXTY-SEVEN, THE SAME YEAR THE FIRST "FOLIO" COLLECTION OF HER LATE HUSBAND'S PLAYS WAS PUBLISHED.

*NEIL GAIMAN. OCTOBER 1987 ~ JANUARY 1996.*

Charles Vess's cover for *The Sandman #19 Remastered*

THE SANDMAN
THE COMPLETE SHAKESPEARE COLLECTION

HOLD FAST! WE STOP HERE, MY FRIENDS.

HAMNET, GO AND WAIT WITH CONDELL AND THE OTHER BOYS.

BUT FATHER.

I WROTE IT AS YOU TOLD ME, LORD. IT IS THE BEST THAT I HAVE WRITTEN, TO THIS DATE.

I am sure it is.

You have come, then, Will Shekespear.

It is all ready?

SO... WE ARE HERE ON YOUR COMMAND, MY LORD, ON MIDSUMMER'S EVE, BY THE LONGMAN OF WILMINGTON. AN ODD CHOICE OF A PLACE FOR US TO PERFORM...

Odd? Wendel's Mound was a theatre before your race came to this island.

BEFORE THE NORMANS?

Before the humans.

Selected pages from Steve Oliff's original color guides to *The Sandman* #19

YOU ARE THE AUTHOR OF THIS AMUSEMENT? IT STRIKES STRANGE MUSIC, SIR. METHINKS I SHOULD BE DISPLEASED, YET I AM NOT.

IT IS FINE WORK. IT IS MOST WORTHY WORK.

AND, UM, THESE -- NO -- THOSE THINGS DO BEST PLEASE ME THAT BEFALL PREPOSTEROUSLY.

AND PUCK MEETS PUCK -- IS THAT NOT PREPOSTEROUS? AND WHAT'S THIS I SPY? YOUR LINES?

OHO-HO-HO, I DO SEE SPORT HERE.

MY LORD. I AM THE, UH, LEADER OF THESE, LORD STRANGE'S MEN. AND THOUGH IT IS A JOY FOR US TO PERFORM, WE ALSO NEED TO PAY OUR WAY THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE.

YOU TALK OF GOLD?

WELL, YES...

GOLD. YOU ASK AUBERON OF THE FAY FOR GOLD...?

THEN YOU MUST HAVE YOUR GOLD, ACTOR.

WHY, THANK YOU, LORD! THIS WILL BE MORE THAN SUFFICIENT!

YOU PLAYED ME WELL, MORTAL. BUT I HAVE PLAYED ME FOR TIME OUT OF MIND.

AND I DO ROBIN GOODFELLOW BETTER THAN ANYONE.

Selected painted pages by Charles Vess from *The Sandman* #75

C.VESS·98

STEVE TREVOR FALLS, AND A NEW HERO IS BORN!

# WONDER WOMAN #14

The critically acclaimed team of writer **TOM KING** and artist **DANIEL SAMPERE** launch Diana's greatest adventure yet

© & ™ DC.

GO ALL IN THIS **OCTOBER**

ALL IN

BLACK LABEL

COVER BY JOHN RIDGWAY, CHARLES VESS & STEVE OLIFF

# SON OF ULTRON

# "THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"